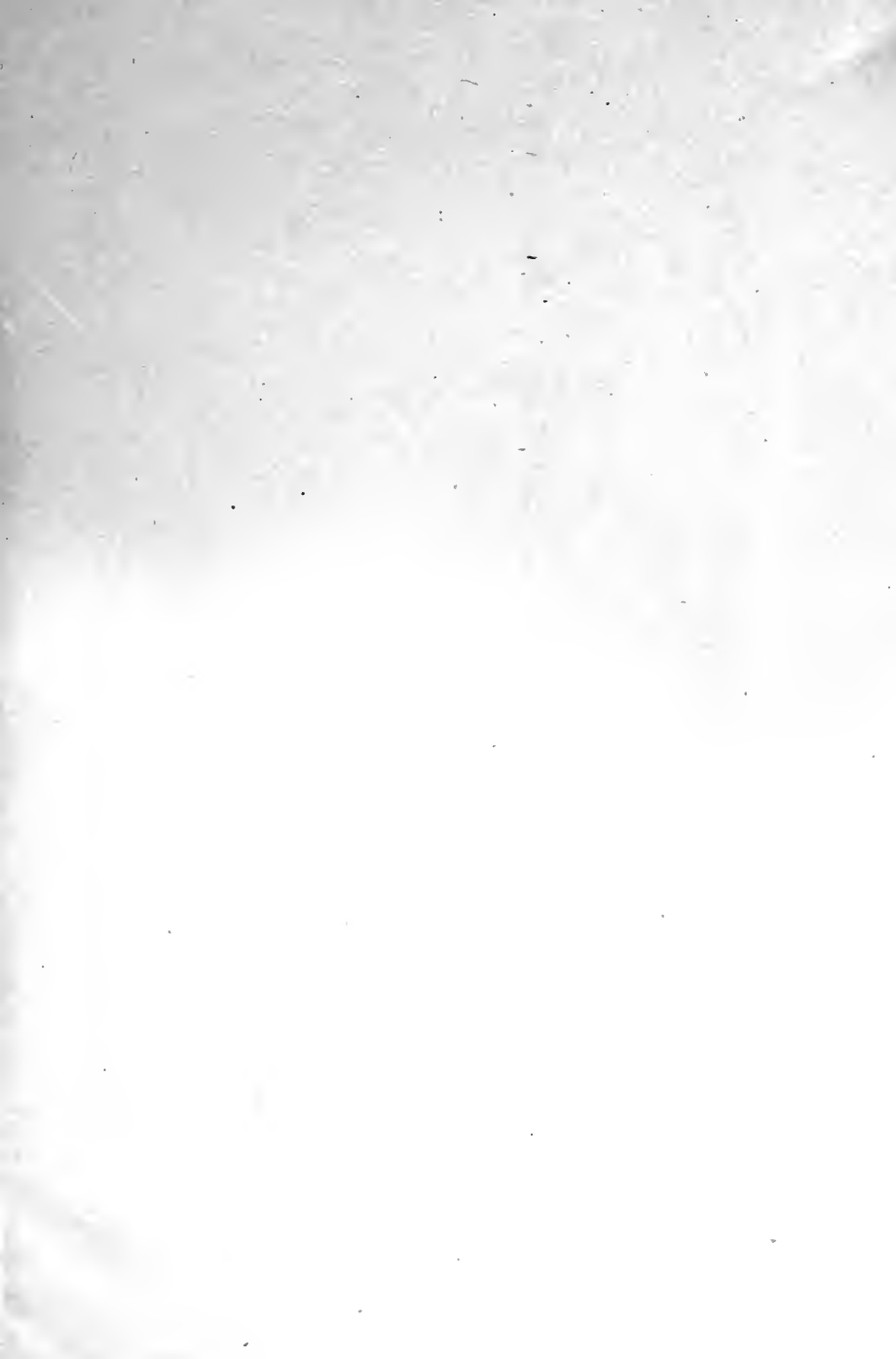




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OUT OF MY LIFE

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FIELD-MARSHAL VON HINDENBURG

OUT OF MY LIFE

By
MARSHAL VON HINDENBURG

Translated by F. A. HOLT

With Frontispiece and Maps

VOL. I



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A FOREWORD

THE memoirs that follow owe their inception not to any personal inclination to authorship, but to the many requests and suggestions that have been made to me.

It is not my intention to write an historical work, but rather to interpret the impressions under which my life has been spent, and to define the principles on which I have considered it my duty to think and act. Nothing was farther from my mind than to write an apology or a controversial treatise, much less an essay in self-glorification. My thoughts, my actions, my mistakes, have been but human. Throughout my life and conduct my criterion has been, not the approval of the world, but my inward convictions, duty, and conscience.

The following pages of reminiscences, written in the most tragic days of our Fatherland, have not come into being under the bitter burden of despair. My gaze is steadfastly directed forward and outward.

I gratefully dedicate my book to all those who fought with me at home and in the field for the existence and greatness of the Empire.

September, 1919

Part I

DAYS OF PEACE AND WAR BEFORE 1914

OUT OF MY LIFE

CHAPTER I

MY YOUTH

ONE spring evening in the year 1859, when I was a boy of eleven, I said good-by to my father at the gate of the Cadets' Academy at Wahlstatt, in Silesia. I was bidding farewell not to my dear father only, but to my whole past life. Overwhelmed by that feeling, I could not prevent the tears from stealing from my eyes. I watched them fall on my uniform. "A man can't be weak and cry in this garb," was the thought that shot through my head. I wrenched myself free from my boyish anguish and mingled, not without a certain apprehension, among my new comrades.

That I should be a soldier was not the result of a special decision. It was a matter of course. Whenever I had had to choose a profession, in boys' games or even in thought, it had always been the military profession. The profession of arms in the service of king and Fatherland was an old tradition in our family.

Our stock—the Beneckendorffs—came from the Altmark, where it had originally settled in the year 1289. From there, following the trend of the times, it found its way through the Neumark to Prussia. There were many who bore my name among the Teutonic knights who went out, as Brothers of the Order, or “War Guests,” to fight against heathendom and Poland. Subsequently our relations with the East became ever closer as we acquired landed property there, while those with the Marches became looser and ceased altogether at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

We first acquired the name “Hindenburg” in the year 1789. We had been connected with that family by marriage in the Neumark period. Further, the grandmother of my great-grandfather, who served in the Von Tettenborn Regiment and settled at Heiligenbeil in East Prussia, was a Hindenburg. Her unmarried brother, who once fought as a colonel under Frederick the Great, bequeathed to his great-nephew, on condition that he assumed both names, his two estates of Neu-deck and Limbsee in the district of Rosenberg, which had originally fallen to Brandenburg with the East Prussian inheritance, but had subsequently been assigned to West Prussia. This received King Frederick William II’s consent, and the name “Hindenburg” came into use through the abbreviation of the double name.

As a result of this bequest the estate at Heiligenbeil was sold. Further, Limbsee had to be disposed of as a matter of necessity after the War of Liberation. Neudeck is in the possession of our family to-day. It belongs to the widow of one of my brothers, who was not quite two years younger than I, so that the course of our lives kept us in close and affectionate touch. He, too, was a cadet and was permitted to serve his king as an officer for many years in war and peace.

During my boyhood my grandparents were living at Neudeck. They now rest in the cemetery there with my own parents and many others who bear my name. Almost every year we paid my grandparents a visit in the summer, though in the early days it meant difficult journeys by coach. I was immensely impressed when my grandfather, who had served in the Von Langen Regiment after 1801, told me how in the winter of 1806-07 as *Landschaftsrat* he had visited Napoleon I in the castle of Finckenstein near by to beg him to remit the levies, but had been coldly turned away. I also heard how the French were quartered in and marched through Neudeck. My uncle, Von der Groeben, who had settled on the Passarge, used to tell me of the battles that were fought in this region in 1807. The Russians pressed forward over the bridge, but were driven back again. A French officer who was defending

the manor with his men was shot through the window of an attic. A little more, and the Russians would have been crossing that bridge again in 1914!

After the death of my grandparents my father and mother went to Neudeck in 1863. There, after a removal which was over familiar ground, we found the home of our ancestors. In that home where I spent so many happy days in my youth I have often, in later years, taken a rest from my labors with my wife and children.

Thus for me Neudeck is "home," and for my own people the firm rock to which we cling with all our hearts. It does not matter to what part of our German Fatherland my profession has called me, I have always felt myself an "Old Prussian."

The son of a soldier, I was born in Posen in 1847. My father was then a lieutenant in the Eighteenth Infantry Regiment. My mother was the daughter of Surgeon-General Schwichart, who was also then living in Posen.

The simple, not to say hard, life of a Prussian country gentleman in modest circumstances, a life which is virtually made up of work and the fulfillment of duty, naturally set its stamp on our whole stock. My father, too, was heart and soul in his profession. Yet he always found time to devote himself, hand in hand with my mother, to the training of his children—for I had two younger

brothers as well as a sister. The way of life of my dear parents, based on deep moral feeling and yet directed to practical ends, revealed a perfect harmony within as without. Their characters were mutually complementary, my mother's serious, often anxious view of life pairing with my father's more peaceful, contemplative disposition. They both united in a warm affection for us and thus worked together in perfect accord on the spiritual and moral training of their children. I find it very hard to say to which of them I should be the more grateful, or to decide which side of our characters was developed by my father and which by my mother. Both my parents strove to give us a healthy body and a strong will ready to cope with the duties that would lie in our path through life. But they also endeavored, by suggestion and the development of the tenderer sides of human feeling, to give us the best thing that parents can ever give—a confident belief in our Lord God and a boundless love for our Fatherland and—what they regarded as the prop and pillar of that Fatherland—our Prussian Royal House.

From our earliest years our father also brought us into touch with the realities of life. In our garden or on our walks he wakened the love of nature within us, showed us the countryside, and taught us to judge and value men by their lives and work. By "us" in this connection I mean

my next brother and myself. Of course the training of my sister, who came after this brother, was more in the hands of my mother, while my youngest brother appeared on the scene just before I became a cadet.

The soldier's nomadic lot took my parents from Posen to Cologne, Graudenz, Pinne in the province of Posen, Glogau, and Kottbus. Then my father left the service and went to Neudeck.

I do not remember much about those Posen days. My grandfather on my mother's side died soon after I was born. In 1813 he had, as a medical officer, won the Iron Cross of the combatant services at the battle of Kulm. He had rallied and led forward a leaderless Landwehr battalion which was in confusion. In later years my grandmother had much to tell us of the "French days" which she had known when she was a girl in Posen. I have vivid memories of a gardener of my grandparents who had once served fourteen days under Frederick the Great. In this way it may be said that a last ray of the glorious Frederickian past fell on my young self. In the year 1848 the rising in Poland had its repercussion on the province of Posen. My father went out with his regiment to suppress this movement. For a time the Poles actually got control of the city. They ordained that every house should be illuminated to celebrate the entrance of their leader, Miroslovsky. My

mother was in no position to resist this decree. She retired to a back room and, sitting on my cot, consoled herself with the thought that the birthday of the "Prince of Prussia" fell on that very day, March 22d, so that to her eyes the lights in the windows of the front rooms were in honor of him.

Twenty-three years later that same child in the cradle witnessed the proclamation of William I, that same "Prince of Prussia," as Emperor, in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

We did not reside very long in Cologne and Graudenz. From the Cologne period the picture of the mighty—though then still unfinished—cathedral is ever before my eyes.

At Pinne, my father, in accordance with the custom then obtaining, commanded a company of Landwehr as supernumerary captain. His service duties did not make very heavy demands on his time, so that just at the very period when my young mind began to stir he was able to devote special attention to us children. He soon taught me geography and French, while the schoolmaster Kobelt, of whom even now I preserve grateful memories, instructed me in reading, writing, and arithmetic. To this epoch I trace my passion for geography, which my father knew how to arouse by his very intuitive and suggestive methods of teaching. My mother gave me my first religious instruction in a way that spoke straight to the heart.

In these years, and as result of this method of training, there gradually developed for me a relation to my parents which was undoubtedly based on unconditional obedience, and yet gave us children a feeling of what was unlimited confidence rather than blind submission to too firm a control.

Pinne is a village bounded by a manor. The latter belonged to a certain Frau von Rappard, at whose house we were frequent visitors. She had no children, but was very fond of them. Her brother, Herr von Massenbach, owned the manor of Bialakesz quite near. I found many dear playmates among his numerous family. My memories of Pinne have always remained very vivid. I visited the place when I was at Posen, in the late autumn of 1914, and was greatly moved on entering the little modest house in the village in which we had once passed so many happy days. The present owner of the property is the son of one of my erstwhile playmates. His father has already gone to his long rest.

It was while I was at Glogau that I entered the Cadet Corps. For the previous two years I had attended the higher elementary school and the Protestant *Gymnasium*. I hear that Glogau has preserved so kindly a memory of me that a plate has been affixed to the house we then lived in to commemorate my residence there. To my great joy I saw the town again when

I was a company officer in the neighboring town of Fraustadt.

Looking back over the period I have referred to, I can certainly say that my early training was based on the soundest principles. It was for that reason that at my departure from the house of my parents I felt that I was leaving a very great deal behind me, and yet that I was taking a very great deal with me on the path that was opening out before me. And it was to remain thus my whole life. Long was I to enjoy the anxious, untiring love of my parents, which was later to be extended to my own family. I lost my mother after I had become a regimental commander; my father left us just before I was appointed to the command of the Fourth Army Corps.

It can certainly be said that in those days life in the Prussian Cadet Corps was consciously and intentionally rough. The training was based, after true concern for education, on a sound development of the body and the will. Energy and resolution were valued just as highly as knowledge. There was nothing narrow, but rather a certain force in this method of training. The individual should and could develop his healthy personality in all freedom. There was something of the Yorck spirit in the method, a spirit which has often been misjudged by superficial observers. Yorck was undoubtedly a hard soldier and master, to himself

no less than to others, but it was he, too, who demanded unlimited self-reliance from each of his subordinates, the same self-reliance he himself displayed in dealing with everyone else. For that reason the Yorck spirit, not merely in its military austerity, but also in its freedom, has been one of the most precious traits of our army.

I have but little sympathy for the humanistics of other schools so far as they are principally concerned with dead languages. Their practical value in life has always been obscure to me. Considered as a means to an end, I am of opinion that the dead languages take up too much time and energy, and as a special study they are for the later years of life. At the risk of being pronounced an ignoramus I could wish that these schools would give greater prominence to modern languages, modern history, geography, and sports, even at the expense of Latin and Greek. Must that which was the only thing to which civilization could cling in the Dark Ages really be regarded as all-important even in modern times? Have we not, since those days, made our own history, literature, and art in hard fighting and ceaseless toil? Do we not need living tongues far more than dead ones if we are to hold our just position in world trade?

What I have said is not intended to convey any contempt of classical antiquity in itself. Quite the contrary. From my earliest years classical history

has had a very great attraction for me. Roman history, in particular, had me in its grip. It seemed to me to be something mighty, almost demoniacal, and this impression possessed me particularly strongly when I visited Rome in later years, and expressed itself, *inter alia*, in the fact that the monuments of the ancient Eternal City appealed to me more than the creations of the Italian Renaissance.

Rome's clever recognition of the advantages and disadvantages of national peculiarities, her ruthless selfishness which scorned no method of dealing with friend or foe where her own interests were concerned, her virtuous indignation, skillfully staged, whenever her enemies paid her back in her own coin, her exploitation of all emotions and weaknesses among enemy peoples (the method which was used adroitly and with special effect in dealing with the Germanic peoples, and proved more effective than arms)—all this, as I was to learn later, found its mirror and perfection in British statesmanship, which succeeded in developing all these aspects of the diplomatic art to the highest pitch of refinement and duplicity.

But though I held the classic world in high honor, I sought my youthful heroes among my own countrymen. I publicly state my honest opinion that in our admiration of an Alcibiades or a Themistocles, of the various Catos or Fabii, we ought not

to be so narrow-minded and ungrateful as quite to lose sight of those men who played every bit as great a part in the history of our Fatherland as these did in the history of Greece and Rome. In this connection I am sorry to say I have often noticed, in conversation with German youths, that with all their learning there is something parochial about their outlook.

Our tutors and lecturers in the Cadet Corps guarded us against such limitation of vision, and I thank them for it now. My thanks are due more especially to the then Lieutenant von Wittich. I had been recommended to him by a relation of mine when I first went to Wahlstatt, and he always took a particularly friendly interest in me. He had left the Cadet Corps himself only a few years before, and he regarded himself as quite one of us, gladly took part in our games, especially snow-balling in winter, and was a man of character and ideas. Above all he possessed a wonderful talent for teaching. In 1859 he taught me geography in the lowest form, and six years later he taught me land survey in the special class in Berlin. When I attended the *Kriegsakademie* some years after I found that Major von Wittich of the General Staff was once more one of my tutors.

Wittich was interested in military history even in his lieutenant days, and on our walks on fine days often set us little exercises in suitable spots

to illustrate the battles which had just been fought in upper Italy—Magenta and Solferino, for example. Later, in Berlin, he encouraged me, now a cadet, to take up the study of military history, and aroused my youthful interest in railways, which was important for my future progress. Who can doubt that military history is the best training for generalship? When I was subsequently transferred to the General Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel von Wittich was still attached to it in an important position, and finally we were simultaneously appointed G.O.C.'s—that is, to the command of an army corps. The little lowest-form boy at Wahlstatt hardly suspected *that* when Lieutenant von Wittich gave him a friendly whack with a ruler because he mixed up Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa.

Our high spirits did not suffer from the hard schooling of our cadet life. I venture to doubt whether the boyish love of larking, which no doubt at times reached the stage of frantic uproar, showed to more advantage in any other school than among us cadets. We found our teachers understanding, lenient judges.

At first I myself was anything but what is known in ordinary life as a model pupil. In the early days I had to get over a certain physical weakness which had been the legacy of previous illnesses. When, thanks to the sound method of training, I had gradually got stronger, I had at

first little inclination to devote myself particularly to study. It was only slowly that my ambitions in that direction were aroused—ambitions which grew with success—and finally brought me, through no merit of mine, the calling of the specially gifted pupil.

Notwithstanding the pride with which I styled myself "Royal Cadet," I hailed my holidays at home with uncontrollable delight. In those days the journeys, especially in winter, were anything but a simple matter. According to one's destination, slow journeys in a train (the carriages were not heated) alternated with even slower journeys in the mail coach. But all these difficulties took a back seat compared with the prospect of seeing my home, parents, and brothers and sister again. Her son's longing for home filled my mother's heart with the deepest joy. I can still remember my first return to Glogau for the Christmas holidays. I had been traveling with other comrades in the coach from Liegnitz the whole night. We were delayed by a snowstorm, and it was still dark when we reached Glogau. There, in the so-called "waiting room," badly lit and barely warmed, my dear mother was sitting knitting stockings just as if, in her anxiety to please one of her children, she were afraid of neglecting the others.

In my first year as cadet, the summer of 1859, we had a visit at Wahlstatt from the then Prince

Frederick William, later the Emperor Frederick, and his wife. It was on this occasion that we saw for the first time almost all the members of our royal house. Never before had we raised our legs so high in the goose step, never had we done such breakneck feats in the gymnastic display which followed, as on that day. It was a long time before we stopped talking about the goodness and affability of the princely pair.

In October of the same year the birthday of King Frederick William IV was celebrated for the last time. It was thus under that sorely tried monarch that I put on the Prussian uniform, which will be the garb of honor to me as long as my life lasts. I had the honor in the year 1865 to be attached as page to Queen Elizabeth, the widow of the late King. The watch which Her Majesty gave me at that time has accompanied me faithfully through three wars.

At Easter, 1863, I was transferred to the special class, and therefore sent to Berlin. The Cadet School in that city was in the new Friedrichstrasse, not far from the Alexanderplatz. For the first time I got to know the Prussian capital, and was at last able to have a glimpse of my all-gracious sovereign, King William I, at the spring reviews, when we paraded on Unter den Linden and had a march past in the Opernplatz, as well as the autumn reviews on the Tempelhofer Feld.

The opening of the year 1864 brought a rousing, if serious, atmosphere into our lives at the Cadet School. The war with Denmark broke out, and in the spring many of our comrades left us to join the ranks of the fighting troops. Unfortunately for me I was too young to be in the number of that highly envied band. I need not try to describe the glowing words with which our departing comrades were accompanied.

We never troubled our heads about the political causes of the war. But all the same we had a proud feeling that a refreshing breeze had at last stirred the feeble and unstable structure of the German union, and that the mere fact was worth more than all the speeches and diplomatic documents put together. For the rest we followed the course of military events with the greatest eagerness, and, quivering with excitement, were joyful spectators when the captured guns were paraded round and the troops made their triumphal entry. We thought we were justified in feeling that within us resided something of that spirit which had led our men to victory on the Danish battlefields. Was it to be wondered at that henceforth we were all impatient for the day on which we ourselves would enter the army?

Before that day came we had the honor and good fortune to be presented personally to our King. We were conducted to the castle, and there

had to tell His Majesty the name and rank of our fathers. It is hardly surprising that many of us, in our agitation, could not get a word out at first, and then poured them out pell-mell. Never before had we been so close to our old sovereign, never before had we looked straight into his kind eyes and heard his voice. The King spoke very earnestly to us. He told us that we must do our duty even in the hardest hours. We were soon to have an opportunity of translating that precept into action. Many of us have sealed our loyalty with death.

I left the Cadet Corps in the spring of 1865. My own personal experiences and inclinations throughout my life have made me grateful and devoted to that military educational establishment. It is a joy to think of my hopeful young comrades in the King's uniform. Even during the World War I was only too happy to have an opportunity of having sons of my colleagues, acquaintances, and fallen comrades as guests at my table. A more favorable occasion, the celebration of my seventieth birthday, which fell during the war, gave me an opportunity of beginning the ceremonies by having three little cadets brought out of the streets of Kreuznach to my luncheon table, piled high with edible gifts. They came in before me cheery and unembarrassed, exactly as I would have boys come, the very embodiment of long-past days, living memories of what I myself had been.

CHAPTER II

IN BATTLE FOR THE GREATNESS OF PRUSSIA AND GERMANY

ON April 7, 1865, I became a second lieutenant in the Third Regiment of Foot Guards. The regiment belonged to those troops which had been reorganized when the number of active units was greatly increased in 1859-60. When I joined it the young regiment had already won its laurels in the campaign of 1864. The historic fame of any military body is a bond of unity between all its members, a kind of cement which holds it together even in the worst of times. It gives place to an indestructible something which retains its power even when, as in the last great war, the regiment has practically to be reconstituted time after time. The old spirit very soon permeates the newcomers.

In my regiment, which had been formed out of the First Regiment of Foot Guards, I found the good old Potsdam spirit, that spirit which corresponded to the best traditions of the Prussian army at that time. The Prussian Corps of Officers

in those days was not blessed with worldly goods—a very good thing. Its wealth consisted of its frugality. The consciousness of a special personal relation to the King—"feudal loyalty," as a German historian has put it—permeated the life of the officer and compensated for many a material privation. This ideal point of view was of priceless advantage to the army. The words "I serve" took on a quite special meaning.

It is frequently said that this point of view has led to the isolation of the officer from the other professional classes. Personally, I have not found the sentiment of exclusiveness more noticeable among the officer class than in any other profession, the members of which keep to themselves and prefer the society of their equals. A picture, very accurate in its broad outlines, of the spirit of the Prussian Corps of Officers in those days may be found in a book on the War Minister Von Roon. In that work the officer corps is shown as an aristocratic professional class, very exclusive and jealous, but not in any sense hidebound or remote from ordinary life. Nor was it without a sprinkling of liberal elements. The new ideal of a severe professional training had revolted against the old ideal of broad humanitarianism. It found its most zealous representatives in the sons of the old monarchical-conservative stock of Prussia. It had been borne along by a strong conviction of the power of

the state and by the Frederickian tradition, which longs to give Prussia an ever greater role in the world through her army.

At the time I joined the regiment, which was then stationed at Danzig, the political events of the following months were already casting their shadows before. It was true that mobilization had not yet been ordered, but the decree for the increase of establishments had already been issued and was in course of execution.

In face of the approaching decisive conflict between Prussia and Austria our political and military ideas traveled over the tracks of Frederick the Great. It was in that train of thought that when we were in Potsdam, to which the regiment was transferred immediately our mobilization was complete, we took our Grenadiers to the tomb of that immortal sovereign. Even the Order of the Day which was issued to our army before the invasion of Bohemia was inspired by thoughts of him, for its closing words ran, "Soldiers, trust to your own strength, and remember that your task is to defeat the same foe which our greatest King once overthrew with his small army."

From the political point of view we realized the necessity of settling the question of Prussian or Austrian supremacy, because within the framework of the union, as then constituted, there was no room for two great Powers to develop side by

side. One of the two had to give way, and as agreement could not be reached by political methods the guns had to speak. But beyond that train of ideas there was no question of any national hostility against Austria. The feeling of community of race with the German elements in the Danube Monarchy, which at that time still predominated, was far too strong to allow sentiments of hostility to prevail. The course of the campaign proved the truth of this time after time. On our side we generally treated our prisoners as fellow countrymen with whom we were only too glad to resume friendly relations after our little dispute had been fought out. The inhabitants of the enemy's country, especially the Czech population, showed themselves well disposed toward us, so much so that in our billets we lived and acted much as we did while on maneuvers at home.

In this war we trod in the footsteps of Frederick the Great—in actual fact as well as in a metaphorical sense. The Guard Corps, for example, in invading Bohemia from Silesia by way of Branau, was taking a route that had often been taken before. And the course of our first action, that at Soor, led us on June 28th into the same region and in the same direction—from Eipel on Burkersdorf—against the enemy as that in which, on September 30, 1747, Prussia's Guard had moved forward in the center of the great King's army

which was advancing in the rigid line of that time during the battle of Soor.

Our Second Battalion, of which I was commanding the first skirmishing section (formed out of the third rank in accordance with the regulations of those days), had no opportunity that day of appearing in the front line, as we formed part of the reserve, which had already been separated from the rest before the battle, as the tactical methods of those days decreed. But all the same, we had found an opportunity of exchanging shots with Austrian infantry in a wood northwest of Burkersdorf. We had made some prisoners, and later on we drove off and captured the transport of about two squadrons of enemy Uhlans who were resting, all unsuspecting, in a glen. Among the transport we found, *inter alia*, the regimental safe, which was handed over, large supplies of bread, which our Grenadiers brought into our camp at Burkersdorf stuck on their bayonets, and the regimental diary which was kept in the same book as that of the Italian campaign of 1859. About twelve years ago I came across an old gentleman from Mecklenburg who was a lieutenant in the service of Austria in one of those very squadrons of Uhlans. He confided to me that in this affair he had lost his brand-new Uhlan uniform which he was to wear at the entry into Berlin.

As I had had so little to do at Soor I had to be

content with having smelled powder and gone through some of the emotional experiences which are the lot of the soldier when he first comes face to face with the enemy.

Straight from the excitement of battle, I was familiarized on the very next day with what I may call the reverse side of the medal. I was assigned the sad duty of taking sixty Grenadiers to search the battlefield and bury the dead—an unpleasant task, which was all the more difficult because the corn was still standing. By dint of enormous exertions, and at times passing other units by running in the ditches by the roadside, I and my men caught up my battalion about midday. The battalion had already joined the main body of the division and was on the march to the south. I came up just in time to witness the storming of the Elbe crossing at Königinhof by our advance guard.

On June 30th I was brought face to face with the sober realities of war's more petty side. I was sent with a small escort to take about thirty wagons, full of prisoners, by night to Tartenau, get a load of food supplies for the empty wagons, and bring them all back to Königinhof. It was not before July 2d that I was able to join my company again. It was high time, for the very next day summoned us to the battlefield of Königgrätz.

The following night I went out on a patrol with my platoon in the direction of the fortress of Josephstadt, and on the morning of July 3d we were in our outpost camp, wet and cold, and apparently unsuspecting, by the southern outskirts of Königinhof. Soon the alarm was given, and shortly after we received the command to get our coffee quickly and be ready to march. Careful listeners could hear the sound of guns in the southwest. Opinions as to the reasons for the alarm being given were divided. The generally accepted view was that the First Army, under Prince Frederick Charles, which had invaded Bohemia from Lausitz—we formed part of the Second Army commanded by the Crown Prince—must have come into contact with a concentrated Austrian corps somewhere.

The order to advance, which now arrived, was greeted with joy. The Guardsmen, green with envy, remembered the brilliant victories which had previously been won by the Fifth Corps, under General von Steinmetz, on our left. In torrents of rain, and bathed in perspiration though the weather was cold, our long columns dragged themselves forward along the bottomless roads. A holy ardor possessed me, and reached the pitch of fear lest we should arrive too late.

My anxiety soon proved to be unnecessary. After we had ascended from the valley of the Elbe

we could hear the sound of guns ever more clearly. Further, about eleven o'clock we saw a group of the higher staff on horseback standing on an eminence by the roadside and gazing south through their glasses. They were the Headquarters Staff of the Second Army, under the supreme command of our Crown Prince, subsequently the Emperor Frederick. Some years later General von Blumenthal, his Chief of Staff at that time, gave me the following account of what transpired at that moment:

"Just when the First Guards Division was passing us on the impossible roads I was asking the Crown Prince to give me his hand. As he looked at me questioningly I added that I wished to congratulate him on the victory that had been won. The Austrian artillery fire was now directed everywhere to the west, a proof that the enemy was held by the First Army along the whole line, so that we should now take him in the flank and partly in the rear. In view of this position it only remained for us to order the Guard Corps to advance to the right, and the Sixth Corps to the left of a hill by Horonowes, crowned by two huge lime trees which were visible in the far distance in spite of the mist. The First and Fifth Corps, which were still on their way to the battlefield, would have to follow these corps. Scarcely any other orders were required from the Crown Prince that day."

Our advance took us at first straight across country; then we deployed, and before long the first shells began to arrive from the heights by Horonowes. The Austrian artillery justified its old excellent reputation. One of the first shells wounded my company commander, another killed my wing N.C.O. just behind me, while shortly after another fell into the middle of the column and put twenty-five men out of action. When, however, the firing ceased and the heights fell into our hands without fighting (because they were only an advanced position lightly held by the enemy for the purpose of surprise and gaining time), there was quite a feeling of disappointment among us. It did not last for long, for we soon had a view over a large part of a mighty battlefield. Somewhat to our right heavy clouds of smoke were rising into the dull sky from the positions of our First and the enemy's army on the Bistritz. The flashes of the guns and the glow of burning villages gave the picture a peculiarly dramatic coloring. The mist, which had become much thicker, the high corn, and the formation of the ground, apparently hid our movements from the enemy. The fire of the enemy batteries, which soon opened on us from the south, without being able to stop us, was therefore remarkably innocuous. Later on most of them were captured, after putting up a brave defense. And so we pressed on as fast as

the formation of the country, the heavy, slippery ground, and the corn, rape, and beet would allow. Our attack, organized according to all the rules of war then in vogue, soon lost cohesion. Individual companies, indeed individual sections, began to look for opponents for themselves. But everyone pressed on. The only co-ordinating impulse was the resolution to get to close quarters with the enemy.

Between Chlum and Nedelist our half battalion—a very favorite battle formation in those days—advancing through the mist and high-standing corn, surprised some enemy infantry coming from the south. The latter were soon forced to retire by the superior fire of our needle guns. Following them with my skirmishing section in extended order, I suddenly came across an Austrian battery, which raced past us with extraordinary daring, unlimbered, and loosed off case-shot at us. A bullet which pierced my helmet grazed my head, and for a short time I lost consciousness. When I recovered we went for that battery. We captured five guns, while three got away. I felt a proud man and gave a sigh of relief when, bleeding from a slight wound in the head, I stood by my captured gun.

But I had little time to rest on my laurels. Enemy jäger, easily recognizable by the feathers in their caps, sprang up from among the wheat.

I beat them off and followed them up to a sunken road.

As luck would have it, this, my first battle experience, became known in Austria during the last great war. A retired Austrian officer, a veteran of 1866, wrote to me from Reichenberg, in Bohemia, that at the battle of Königgrätz he had been a regimental cadet in the battery I had attacked, and illustrated his statement with a sketch map. As he added a few kind words I thanked him warmly, and so between the two former enemies a most friendly exchange of letters took place.

When I reached the sunken road to which I have referred, I took a good look round. The enemy jäger had vanished in the rain and mist. The villages in the neighborhood—Westar was immediately in front, Rosberitz on my right, and Sweti on my left—were obviously still in possession of the enemy. Fighting was already going on for Rosberitz. I was quite alone with my section. Nothing was to be seen of our people behind me. The detachments in close order had not followed me southward, and appeared to have veered to the right. I decided to bring my isolation on that far-flung battlefield to an end by following the sunken road to Rosberitz. Before I reached my goal several more Austrian squadrons shot past us, not noticing me and my handful of men. They crossed the sunken road at a level place just ahead

of me, and shortly after, as the sound of lively rifle fire showed me, came into contact with some infantry north of Rosberitz, whom I could not see from where I was. Soon a number of riderless horses swept back past us, and before long the whole lot came pelting by again in wild confusion. I sent a few shots after them, as the white cloaks of the riders made an excellent target in the poor light.

When I reached Rosberitz I found the situation there very critical. Sections and companies of different regiments of our division were dashing themselves furiously against very superior forces of the enemy. At first there were no reinforcements behind our weak detachments. The bulk of the division had been drawn away to the village of Chlum, situated on a height, and was violently engaged there. My half battalion, which I had been lucky enough to rejoin at the eastern outskirts of Rosberitz, was therefore the first reinforcement.

I really cannot say which was the more surprised, the Austrians or ourselves. However, the enemy masses concentrated and closed in on us from three sides in order to recover complete possession of the village. Fearful as was the effect of the fire from our needle guns, as each wave collapsed a fresh one came to take its place. Murderous hand-to-hand fighting took place in the streets between the

thatched cottages on fire. All idea of fighting in regular units was lost. Everyone shot and stabbed at random to the best of his ability. Prince Anthony of Hohenzollern was seriously wounded, and collapsed. Ensign von Woyrsch—now a field-marshal—remained with a handful of men by the prince while the battle swayed this way and that. The prince's gold watch was handed over to me to prevent its falling into the hands of enemy looters. Before long we were in serious danger of being cut off. Austrian bugles were being blown in a side street which came out behind us, and we could hear the roll of the enemy's drums, which made a more hollow sound than ours. We were hard pressed in front as well, and there was nothing for it but to retire. We were saved by a burning roof which had fallen into the street and formed a barrier of flame and thick smoke. We escaped under its protection to the shelter of a height just northeast of the village.

We were furiously disappointed, and refused to withdraw any farther. As the most senior officer present, Major Count Waldersee, of the First Regiment of Foot Guards—who fell before Paris in 1870 at the head of the "Queen Augusta" Guard Grenadier Regiment—ordered the two standards we had to be planted in the ground. The men flocked to them, and the units were reorganized. Reinforcements were already coming up from the

rear, and so, with drums beating, we all stormed forward once more against the enemy, who had contented himself with recovering possession of the village. However, he soon evacuated it in order to conform to the general retreat of his army.

In Rosberitz we found the Prince of Hohenzollern again, but, unfortunately, he shortly afterward succumbed to his wounds in hospital at Königinhof. The enemy had carried off his faithful guard as prisoners with them. I lost several Grenadiers from my section in that way. They had defended themselves very bravely in a brickworks. Two days later, as we were pitching our camp southwest of the fortress of Königgrätz in the course of our march to the south, these men came up and rejoined us. The commandant of the fortress had sent them out in the direction of the Prussian camp fires in order to be relieved of the responsibility of feeding them. They were lucky enough to strike their own unit at once.

In the evening of the battle we proceeded to Westar, and remained there until we left the battlefield for good. The doctor wanted to send me to hospital on account of my head wound, but as I expected there would be another battle behind the Elbe I contented myself with poultices and a light bandage, and for the rest of the march had to wear a cap instead of my helmet.

The feelings which assailed me on the evening of July 3d were of a very special kind. Next to thankfulness to our Lord God, the dominant emotion was a certain proud consciousness that I had co-operated in a feat which added a new page of glory to the history of the Prussian army and our Prussian Fatherland. We had not yet appreciated the full extent of our victory; but it was already clear to us that it was a very different matter from the previous battles. I had kind thoughts for my fallen and wounded comrades. My section had lost half its strength—sufficient proof that it had done its duty.

When we crossed the Elbe, by a temporary bridge at Pardubitz, on the evening of July 6th, the Crown Prince was waiting there for the regiment, and gave us his thanks for our behavior in the battle. We thanked him with loud cheers and continued our march, proud of the praise lavished upon us by the commander-in-chief of our army, who was also the heir to the Prussian throne, and prepared to follow him to further battlefields.

However, the rest of the campaign brought us nothing but marches; certainly no events worth mentioning. The armistice which followed on July 22d found us in lower Austria, about thirty miles from Vienna. When we began our homeward march soon after, we were accompanied by an unwelcome guest, cholera. We only got rid of

it by degrees, and then not before it had exacted a large toll of victims from our ranks.

We remained a few weeks on the Eger. During that period I met my father in Prague. As a member of the Order of St. John he was employed in a hospital on the battlefield of Königgrätz. We did not let slip such an opportunity of visiting the neighboring battlefield of our great King. To our intense surprise we found that adjacent to the monument to Field-Marshal Count Schwerin (who fell at Prague) erected by the state of Prussia after the War of Liberation, there was another which the Emperor Joseph II, a great admirer of Frederick the Great, had had erected to the memory of his enemy hero.

In the course of the last war I was again specially reminded of the visit to this battlefield. There was a close parallel between the situation of Prussia in 1757 and that of Germany in 1914. Just as Kolin followed Prague, so the failure of our great offensive in the battle of the Marne, which followed a succession of victories, involved a fateful prolongation of our Fatherland's fight for existence. But while the conclusion of the Seven Years' War showed us a mighty Prussia, we behold a shattered Germany at the end of the four years' desperate struggle. Have we been unworthy of our fathers?

Continuing our march home, we crossed the frontiers of Bohemia and Saxony on September 2d,

and on the 8th the frontier of the Mark of Brandenburg at the Grosenhain-Elster road. A triumphal arch greeted us. We marched through it on our homeward way to the strains of "Heil dir im Siegerkranz." I need not try to describe our feelings!

On September 20th we made our triumphal entry into Berlin. The grand review followed on what is now the Königsplatz, but was then a sandy parade ground. The site of the present General Staff building was occupied by a timber yard, which was connected with the town by a lane bordered with willows. Starting from the parade ground, the troops marched under the Brandenburger Tor, up the Linden to the Opernplatz. Here took place the march past His Majesty the King. Blücher, Scharnhorst, and Gneisenau looked down from their pedestals. They might well be pleased with us!

My battalion had assembled in the Floraplatz in order to take its place in the column. It was here that my commanding officer handed me the Order of the Red Eagle, Fourth Class, with swords, and told me to put it on at once, as the new decorations were to be worn for the triumphal march. As I looked about me, apparently in some embarrassment, an old lady stepped out of the crowd of spectators and fastened the decoration to my breast with a pin. So whenever I have crossed the Flora-

platz in later years, whether walking or riding, I have always gratefully remembered the kind Berlin lady who once gave the eighteen-year-old lieutenant his first Order there.

After the war Hanover was assigned to the Third Guards Regiment as peace station. The intention was to pay the former capital a special compliment. We were not pleased to be sent there, but when the hour of parting struck, twelve years later, as the regiment was transferred to Berlin, there was not a man in its ranks who did not regret leaving it. I myself had to leave the beautiful town as early as 1873, but I had then grown so fond of it that I took up residence there after my retirement from the service later on.

We had soon made friendships in our new station. Of course, many Hanoverians held completely aloof from us for political reasons. We never condemned anyone for loyalty to the hereditary reigning house, however deep was our conviction that the union of Hanover with Prussia was essential. We regarded Guelph feeling as hostile only where, as illustrated by the conduct of individuals, it showed that it did not bear its sorrow with dignity, but expressed it in ill-mannered behavior, insults, or insubordination.

As the years rolled by we made ourselves ever more at home in Hanover, which, in the happiest way, seems to have all the advantages of a big

town with none of its disadvantages. A lively, aristocratic social life, which attained its climax after the war with France when Their Highnesses Prince Albert of Prussia and his wife resided there for several years, alternated with visits to the excellent Court Theater, which was made very cheap to the young officer. Splendid parks and one of the finest of German forests, the Eilenriede, surround the town, and in them we could enjoy ourselves, walking or riding in our spare time. And if, instead of going to the autumn exercises of the Guard Corps at Potsdam, we attended maneuvers in the province, we gradually got to know and appreciate the peculiar charm of all lower Saxony from the mountains to the sea. The Waterloo Platz was the scene of such duties as there were. It was there that for three years I trained my successive batches of recruits and had my first quarters—living and sleeping room—in one of its barracks. Even to-day, whenever I visit that part of the town, I go back in thought to the golden hours of youth. Almost all my comrades of that time have joined the great army. Quite recently I have had an opportunity of seeing Major von Seel (retired), who was my company commander for many years. I owe this man of eighty years more than I can say.

In the summer of 1867 His Majesty the King visited Hanover for the first time. When he ar-

rived I was in the guard of honor which was drawn up before the palace in George's Park, and my war lord made me happy by asking me on what occasion I had won the Order of Swords. In later years, after I had also won the Iron Cross, in 1870-71, my Kaiser and King has often asked me the same question when I have been reporting for transfer or promotion. I always thought of this first occasion with the same joy and pride as possessed me then.

The political, military, and social circumstances of Hanover became ever more stable. Before long this new province, too, was to prove on many a bloody battlefield that it was equally part and parcel of Prussia!

When the war of 1870 broke out I took the field as adjutant of the First Battalion. My commanding officer, Major von Seegenberg, had gone through the campaigns of 1864 and 1866 as a company commander in the regiment. He was a war-hardened old Prussian soldier of irresistible energy and tireless concern for the welfare of his troops. The relations between us were good on both sides.

The opening of the campaign brought my regiment, as indeed the whole Guard Corps, bitter disappointment, inasmuch as we marched for weeks and yet did not come into contact with the enemy. It was not until after we had crossed the Moselle above Pont-à-Mousson, and nearly reached the

Meuse, that the events west of Metz on August 17th summoned us to that neighborhood. We turned north, and after an extraordinarily tiring march reached the battlefield of Vionville in the evening of that day. Relics of the fearful struggle of our Third and Tenth Corps on the day before met our eyes at every turn. Of the military situation as a whole we knew next to nothing. Thus it was in an almost complete mental fog that on August 18th we marched from our camp at Hannonville, west of Mars-la-Tour, and reached Doncourt about midday. Although this was a relatively short march, it required an enormous effort owing to the fact that it was carried out in close mass formation, and that we unfortunately crossed the Saxon (Twelfth) Corps. Besides, the heat was terrific, the dust awful, and we had been unable to get enough water since the previous day. On the march I had visited the cemetery of Mars-la-Tour to see the grave of a cousin of mine in the Second Guard Dragoons who had fallen; and I availed myself of the opportunity of riding over the ground across which the Thirty-eighth Infantry Brigade and the First Guard Dragoon Regiment had made their attack. Groups, in places whole mounds, of corpses, both Prussian and French, showed what a murderous encounter had taken place only quite a short distance away from us.

We halted at Doncourt and began to think of

cooking a meal. Rumors ran round that Bazaine had marched west and so got away. The enthusiasm of the previous day had somewhat waned. Suddenly a tremendous cannonade started in the east. The Ninth Corps had got into touch with the enemy. The "stand to" cheered us all up. Our nerves began to brace themselves up again and our hearts to beat faster and stronger. We resumed our march to the north. The impression that we were on the eve of a great battle grew stronger from minute to minute. We went on, and quite close to Batilly received orders to unfurl our colors. This was done to the accompaniment of a threefold "hurrah." What a moving moment that was! Almost simultaneously some Guard batteries galloped past us, going east toward the enemy's positions. The main features of the battle became more distinct. From the heights of Amanweiler right to St.-Privat thick, heavy clouds of smoke were rising. Enemy infantry and artillery were posted there in several successive lines. For the time being their fire was directed with extreme fury against our Ninth Army Corps. Its left wing was apparently commanded by the enemy. We could not make out more.

To avoid a frontal attack against the enemy's lines we took a gully which ran parallel to the enemy's front for about three miles, and turned north to Ste.-Marie-aux-Chênes. This village had

been attacked and captured by the advance guard of our division and part of the Twelfth Corps, which was marching on Auboué on our left. After capture of Ste.-Marie our brigade deployed immediately south of the village and on a front facing it. We rested. Truly a peculiar kind of rest! Stray bullets, from enemy riflemen pushed forward from St.-Privat, fell here and there among our formations in close order. Lieutenant von Hellendorf, of the First Guards Regiment, was shot quite close to me. His father, commanding a battalion of the same regiment, had fallen, also not far from where I stood, at Rosberitz, in the battle of Königgrätz, in 1866. Several men were wounded.

I turned the situation over in my mind. Away to the east, almost on the right flank of our present front, lay St.-Privat, crowning a gentle, sloping hill connected with Ste.-Marie-aux-Chênes, about a mile and a quarter away, by a dead-straight road bordered with poplars. The country north of this road was for the most part concealed by the trees, but gave the same impression of lack of cover as that south of the road. On the height itself an almost unearthly silence reigned. Our eyes strove involuntarily to pierce the secrets we suspected there. Apparently it was not thought necessary on our side to try and pierce the veil by reconnaissance. So we remained quietly where we were,

About half past five in the afternoon our brigade received orders to attack. We were to press forward in a northerly direction on the east side of Ste.-Marie, and, when we had crossed the road, wheel to attack St.-Privat. The thought that these skillful movements could be taken in the right flank from St.-Privat sprang to one's mind at once.

Just before our brigade rose up, the whole neighborhood of St.-Privat sprang to life and shrouded itself in the smoke of lines of French infantry. What had happened was that the Fourth Guards Brigade, which was not in our division, was already pressing on south of the road. For the time being the whole force of the enemy's fire was turned against it. These troops would have been reduced to pulp in a very short time if we, the First Guards Brigade, had not immediately attacked north of the road and thereby taken the burden off them. Indeed, it seemed almost impossible to get forward at all. My commanding officer rode forward with me to reconnoiter the country ahead and give the battalion its route direction within the orbit of the brigade. A hurricane of continuous fire now swept over us from every quarter. Yet we had to try and execute the movement which had been begun. We managed at length to cross the road. Once across, the compact columns formed a front against the enemy lines, and in open order stormed forward

toward St.-Privat. Every man tried his hardest to get to close quarters with the enemy in order to use his rifle, which was inferior to the *chassepot*. The sight was as terrible as impressive. The ground behind the mass surging forward, as if against a hailstorm, was strewn with dead and wounded, and yet the brave troops pressed on without stopping. They were gradually deprived of their officers and N.C.O.'s, who had to be replaced by the best of the Fusiliers and Grenadiers. As I was riding forward I saw the general of the Guard Corps, Prince Augustus of Würtemberg, on horseback at the outskirts of Ste.-Marie. He was following the terrible crisis in which his splendid regiment was involved and looked like being destroyed. It is said that just opposite him Marshal Canrobert was standing at the entrance to St.-Privat.

To get his battalion out of the vortex of the masses northeast of Ste.-Marie and give it the necessary room to fight, my commanding officer did not make it form a front against St.-Privat, but at first made it follow a fold of the ground and continue the original movement to the north. We had thus a certain amount of cover, but we made so great a detour that after wheeling we formed the left wing of the brigade. In these circumstances we managed, with increasing losses, to get halfway to Ste.-Marie-Roncourt.

Before we could prepare to envelop St.-Privat we had to see what the situation was at Roncourt, which the Saxons from Aboué did not yet seem to have reached. I rode forward, found the village unoccupied by either friend or foe, but noticed that there was French infantry in the quarries east of the village. I was successful in getting two companies of my battalion into Roncourt in time. Soon after the enemy made a counterattack from the quarry, but was beaten off. It was now possible for the other two companies, no longer anxious about their flanks and rear, to turn against the northern exit from St.-Privat to relieve—at least to some extent—the fearful frontal attack of the rest of the brigade. Later, after Roncourt had been occupied by parts of the Twelfth Corps, the two companies we had used there were brought up.

Meanwhile the bloody struggle continued uninterruptedly in the front.

On the enemy's side it was an unceasing storm of rifle fire from several lines of infantry, fire which strove to make all life impossible on the broad, exposed field of attack. On our side it was a line—a line with innumerable gaps—formed by remnants of units which did not merely cling to the ground, however, but strove time after time to close with the enemy in spasmodic rushes. I held my breath as I watched the scene in utter anguish

lest an enemy counterattack should hurl our men back. But except for an attempt to break out with cavalry north of St.-Privat, an attempt which did not survive the first charge, the French did not leave their positions.

There was now a pause in the infantry action. Both sides were exhausted, and lay facing each other, firing but seldom. The halt in the hostilities on the battlefield was so marked that I rode along the firing line from the left wing almost to the center of the brigade without feeling I was running any risk. Now, however, our artillery, which had been brought up, began its work of preparation, and before long fresh forces, the Second Guards Brigade from Ste.-Marie, made their appearance among the fast-vanishing remnants of the Fourth and First, while Saxon reinforcements approached from the northwest. The pressure on the tortured infantry was sensibly relieved. There, where death and ruin seemed the only prospect, a fresh battle spirit seemed to stir, a new will to victory was born, which reached its heroic climax in a fierce charge at the enemy. It was an indescribably moving moment when our foremost lines rose for the final assault just as the sun was going down. No orders urged them on. Spiritual enthusiasm, a stern resolve to conquer, and the holy lust of battle, drove them forward. This irresistible impetus carried everything away with it. The bul-

wark of the foe was stormed as darkness descended. A fierce exultation seized all our men.

The softer sides of human emotion came to the surface when, late in the evening, I counted the remnants of our battalion, and on the next morning visited the yet smaller fragments of the other units of my regiment. At such times we think not only of the victory that has been won, but of the price which has been paid for it. The Third Guards Regiment had suffered losses of 36 officers and 1,060 noncommissioned officers and men, of which 17 officers and 306 men were killed. All the Guards infantry regiments had similar losses to show. During the last great war the losses in battle of our infantry regiments repeatedly reached the level of those suffered by the Guards at St.-Privat. I was able to appreciate from my own experience what that meant to the troops. What a mass of the best, frequently irreplaceable, human energy has sunk into the grave. And, on the other hand, what a superb spirit must have lived in our people to enable them to keep our army resolute in a struggle lasting years!

On August 19th we buried our dead, and in the afternoon of the 20th we marched away to the west. On the way our divisional commander, Lieutenant-General von Pape, gave us his thanks for our victory, but laid special emphasis on the

fact that we had only done our bounden duty. He concluded with these words: "In short, what applies to us is the old soldier's hymn:

"Whether thousands to left,
Or thousands to right,
Of all friends bereft,
A soldier must fight."

Our reply was a thunderous cheer for His Majesty the King.

Whatever military criticisms may be leveled at the battle of St.-Privat, they detract in no way from its inward grandeur. That grandeur lies in the spirit with which the men bore the terrible crisis for hours on end and finally overcame it victoriously. That feeling was thenceforth paramount in our minds whenever we remembered August 18th. The stern mood which had possessed our men throughout the battle soon faded away. In its place came a sense of pride in individual prowess and collective achievement which lives to-day. Once more, in the year 1918, and again on hostile soil, I celebrated the anniversary of St.-Privat with the Third Guards Regiment, of which I was once more a member by the favor of my King. Many "old gentlemen" who fought with me in 1870, among them Major von Seel, whom I have mentioned, had come from home to the front for the anniversary. It was the last time that I was to see the proud regiment!

I hear that the monuments to the Prussian Guard on the heights of St.-Privat have now been thrown down by our enemies. If it really is so, I do not believe that German heroism can be degraded by acts of that kind. Many a time have I seen German officers and men standing before French monuments, even those on German soil, and giving expression to their respect for an enemy's achievements and sacrifices.

After the battle the commander of my battalion, as the only unwounded staff officer, took over the command of the regiment. I remained his adjutant in his new post.

The course of the operations which came to such a memorable conclusion at Sedan brought little of note in my way. We were present at the prelude, the battle of Beaumont, on August 30th, but, being in the reserve, were only spectators. On September 1st, also, I followed the course of the battle mainly in the role of a looker-on. The Guard Corps formed the northeastern section of the iron ring which closed in on MacMahon's army during that day. In particular the First Guards Brigade was held in readiness behind the heights east of the Givonne Valley from the morning to the afternoon. I used this period of inactivity to visit the long line of Guard batteries posted at the edge of the heights. They were firing across the valley at the

French lying on the wooded heights on the far side. From this point we had a comprehensive view of the whole region from the forest of Ardennes to the valley of the Meuse. I felt as if I could almost touch the heights of Illy and the French positions west of the Givonne stream, including the Bois de la Garonne. The catastrophe to the French army thus developed practically before my eyes. I was able to observe how the German ring of fire gradually closed in on the unhappy enemy and watch the French making heroic efforts, though these were doomed to failure from the start, to break through our encircling lines by thrusts at different points.

The battle had a quite special interest for me. The fact is that on the previous day, as we were going through Carignan, a talkative French harness maker, from whom I had bought a riding whip as we passed, had told me that the French Emperor was with his army. I had handed this piece of news on, but no one would believe it. On the day of the battle, when speaking of the destruction of the enemy, which was becoming more complete from minute to minute, I remarked, "Napoleon, too, is stewing in that caldron." My remark was greeted with laughter. My triumph was great when my statement was subsequently confirmed.

That day my regiment took no more active share

in the battle. About three o'clock in the afternoon we followed the First Guards Regiment over the Givonne sector. By that time the bottom had been knocked out of the French resistance by the fire of our artillery, coming as it did from all sides. All that remained to be done was to press the enemy back into Sedan to convince him once and for all that further resistance was perfectly hopeless. The picture of destruction which I beheld during this process from the northeastern edge of the Bois de la Garonne surpassed all the horrors that had ever met my gaze, even on the battlefield.

Between four and five we went back to our bivouac. The battle was over. Only toward evening a shell flew by and a bullet whistled over our heads. When we looked toward the edge of the forest a scowling Turco waved his rifle threateningly at us and disappeared with great bounds into the darkness of the trees.

Never, either before or since, have I spent the night on a battlefield with the same feeling of quiet satisfaction as possessed me now. For after "Now thank we all our God" had resounded through the darkness, every man lay down to dream of a speedy end to the war. Of course, we were bitterly deceived so far as that was concerned. The war continued. There are those among us who have represented the continuation of the French resist-

ance after the battle of Sedan as merely a piece of useless French self-mutilation. I was not able to share that view, for I cannot but approve the far-reaching views which animated the dictators of France at that time. In my opinion the fact that the French Republic took up arms at the point where the Empire had been compelled to lay them down was not only a proof of ideal patriotic spirit, but of far-seeing statesmanship as well. I firmly believe, even to-day, that if France had abandoned her resistance at that moment she would have surrendered the greatest part of her national heritage, and with it her prospects of a brighter future.

In the morning of September 2d we had a visit from the Crown Prince, who brought us the first news of the capture of Napoleon and his army, and in the afternoon it was followed by that of our King and military leaders. It is impossible to form any conception of the unexampled enthusiasm with which the monarch was received. The men simply could not be kept in the ranks. They swarmed round their dearly loved master and kissed his hands and feet. His Majesty saw his Guards for the first time in the campaign. With tears streaming down his face he thanked us for all we had done at St.-Privat. This was indeed a rich reward for those fateful hours! Bismarck was also in the King's suite. In Olympian calm he was riding at the end of the cavalcade, but he was recognized

and received a special cheer, which he accepted with a smile. Moltke was not present.

In the morning of September 3d my regiment received an order to advance on Sedan and drive any French who happened to be outside the fortress within its walls. The idea of this was to prevent the large bodies of our enemy, who were roving round the outskirts, from being tempted to pick up the enormous numbers of rifles that were lying about, and make the attempt, however hopeless, to cut their way through. I rode on ahead through the Bois de la Garonne to the heights immediately above the town. There I discovered that the "Red-Trousers," which added such a picturesque touch to the landscape, were merely harmless searchers for cloaks and coats which they wanted to take with them into captivity.

The intervention of my regiment was, therefore, unnecessary; a few patrols from other troops which were encamped near by were all that was required. When I rode back with this news to my regiment, which was coming up behind, I saw a cloud of dust in the woods on the road going north. A French military doctor, who was standing in front of Quérumont Farm (which had been converted into a hospital), and accompanied me part of the way, told me that in that cloud of dust was the Emperor Napoleon, who was on his way to Belgium with a guard of Black Hussars. If I had

reached that road a few minutes earlier I should have been an eyewitness of the historic spectacle.

In the evening of that day we left the battlefield and returned to our quarters. Then, after a day's rest, we resumed our march on Paris. Our advance brought us first over the battlefield of Beaumont, and then through districts which have been the scene of fateful encounters in the last great war. On September 11th and 12th the regiment was at Craonne and Corbény, two pretty little villages lying at the foot of the Mont d'Hiver. Once more, on May 28, 1918, I stood on that same Mont d'Hiver with my All-Highest War Lord, while the battle of Soissons-Rheims was in progress. I told His Majesty that I had encamped there forty-eight years before. The two villages were now little more than heaps of rubbish. The house at the corner of the market place of Corbény, in which I had had my quarters, had vanished under rubble and ashes. The Mont d'Hiver, which was a green, partly wooded ridge, in 1870, was now nothing but a bare, steep chalk cliff from which guns, the spade, and the intrenching tool had removed every vestige of soil. What a melancholy return, even in that hour of triumph.

On September 19th, from the plateau of Gonesse, five miles northeast of St.-Denis, we had our first glimpse of the French capital. The gilded domes of the Invalides and other churches sparkled in the

morning sunlight. I am sure that when the Crusaders gazed for the first time on Jerusalem their feelings were the same as ours when we saw Paris lying at our feet. We started off at three o'clock in the morning, while it was still dark, and spent the entire day—a beautiful autumn day—lying in the stubble fields, ready to intervene if we or the neighboring divisions met with difficulty in placing and occupying our outpost line. It was not until late in the afternoon that we got back to billets. We remained for some time in quarters at Gonesse, a place which enjoys some historical note from the fact that in 1815 Blücher and Wellington, who had reached Paris, met here to discuss the future course of the operations.

Instead of a complete and speedy victory, we were to be faced with many months of thoroughly exhausting and thankless investment operations, which were but seldom interrupted on our front by any noteworthy sortie. Their monotony was first broken about Christmas, when the bombardment of the forts made things a little more lively in a military sense.

The middle of January brought me a special event. I was sent, with a sergeant, as representative of my regiment to the proclamation of the Emperor at Versailles. I received the order in question in the evening of January 16th. Before the night was out I was to get to Margency, twelve

miles away, where the Headquarters Staff of the Meuse army had made arrangements for the billeting of all deputations coming from the east. From there we were to proceed to Versailles on the 17th, passing through St.-Germain. I could not negotiate the distance—about twenty-five miles—on horseback, as I had my kit to take with me. I therefore promptly planted myself, with my sergeant and soldier servant, on the transport wagon of the Body Company of the First Guards Regiment, which happened to be where I was and had also been summoned to Versailles. Off we went at a snail's pace in the dark, freezing night to Margency, where a warm fireside, a good bed of straw, and tea were awaiting us.

Early on the 18th the commander of the Body Company told me that he had just received orders not to proceed to Versailles, but to return to the regiment. Fortunately, another comrade took me and my servant in his dogcart, and my sergeant met with a welcome reception somewhere else. So we trotted off on a bright winter morning to our next stage, St.-Germain. But there is no such thing as a lasting compact with Fate. Our dogcart, piled high with our belongings, suddenly lost a wheel and pitched the whole lot of us on to the road. Fortunately we soon came across a field smithy which repaired the damage, so that we were able to join the rest of our fellow travelers at

breakfast in the Pavillon d'Henri Quatre, splendidly situated on the terrace above the Seine.

It was a peculiar collection of carriages which made its entrance into Versailles as the sun was setting. There were representatives of every type of vehicle which could be scraped up from the châteaux, villas, and farms round Paris. The greatest sensation was made by a potato wagon the driver of which was celebrating the day by displaying a huge Prussian flag—there was no German flag as yet—to right and left of his seat. I soon found myself in a good billet in the Avenue de Paris kept by a cheerful old lady, and in the evening we all assembled for an excellent supper—a luxury we had not known for ages—in the Hôtel des Reservoirs.

The ceremony of the 18th is familiar enough. I have countless impressions of it. It goes without saying that the personality of my all-gracious King and master had the most inspiring and yet the most touching effect upon me. His calm and simple, yet commanding presence gave the ceremony a greater sanctity than all external pomp. The affectionate enthusiasm for the illustrious sovereign was fully shared by all present, no matter to what German tribe they belonged. Indeed, our South German brothers gave the most vociferous expression to their joy at the foundation of the "German Empire." For historic reasons we Prussians were somewhat more reserved, for we had

learned to know our own value at a time when Germany was but a geographical expression. That cannot be said in future!

For the evening of the 18th the generals present in Versailles were invited to His Majesty's table in the Préfecture. The rest of us were the Emperor's guests at the Hôtel de France.

January 19th began with an inspection of the old French royal palace, with its proud collection of pictures immortalizing the glories of France. We also visited the great park. Then the sudden thunder of cannon from the town burst upon us. The garrison of Versailles had already received the alarm and was on the march. What had happened was that the French had made their great sortie from Mont Valérien. We watched the battle for a considerable time in the capacity of idle spectators. In the afternoon we started out on our homeward journey, and late that night I reached the headquarters of my regiment at Villiers le Roi, five miles north of St.-Denis, thankful that I had been privileged to witness the great historic event and do honor to him who was now my Emperor.

The fruitless sortie from Mont Valérien was France's last great effort. It was followed on the 26th by the capitulation of Paris, and on the 28th by the general armistice. Immediately after the surrender of the forts our brigade was pushed forward into the western bend of the Seine between

Mont Valérien and St.-Denis. We found good, well-furnished billets, just on the bank of the river, opposite Paris, and close to the Pont de Neuilly.

There I had an opportunity to make at least a nodding acquaintance with Paris. In the morning of March 2d I went for a ride in the company of an orderly officer of the Guard Hussars, across the Pont de Neuilly, to the Arc de Triomphe. I could not keep away from it any more than my friend Bernhardt, then lieutenant of Hussars, and the first man to enter Paris, had been able to the day before. Then I rode down the Champs Élysées, through the Place de la Concorde and the Tuileries to the Louvre, and finally returned home along the Seine and through the Bois de Boulogne. Throughout my ride I let the historical monuments of the past of a great enemy produce their full effect upon me. The few inhabitants who showed themselves adopted an attitude of aloofness.

Although I am little inclined to cosmopolitanism, I have always been free from prejudice toward other nations. Though their peculiarities are somewhat foreign to me, I do not fail to see their good side. I admit that the temperament of the French nation is too vivacious, and therefore too capricious, for my taste. On the other hand, the *élan* which these people display in a fashion all their own, even in times of crisis, has a particular attraction for me.

But what I appreciate most of all is the fact that strong personalities can produce such an effect on the masses and subject them so completely to their influence that the French nation is able to lay aside every kind of private interest, even to the point of complete self-sacrifice, out of devotion to a patriotic ideal. In contrast to this I must mention the behavior of the French to defenseless prisoners in the last war, behavior which frequently approached sheer sadism and could not be condoned on the ground of their vivacious temperament.

The day after my visit to Paris the Guard Corps had the high honor and immense joy of being paraded at Longchamps before His Majesty the Kaiser and King. The war-tried regiments defiled in the old Prussian manner before their war lord, at whose command they were ever ready to give their lives for the protection and glory of the Fatherland.

There was no longer any question for us of a proper march through Paris, that having been assigned previously to other army corps, because the preliminary peace had meanwhile been signed and Germany had no mind to force a foe, whom she had beaten in honorable fight, to drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs.

It was before Paris, too, that we celebrated His Majesty's birthday, on March 22d. It was a

lovely, warm, spring day, and we had a field service in the open air, a salute of guns from the forts, and banquets for both officers and men. The cheerful prospect of a speedy return home, our duty loyally done, doubled our enthusiasm.

But we were not to leave France quite so soon as we hoped, for at first we had to remain on the northern front of Paris in and around St.-Denis, and were thus witnesses of the struggle between the French government and the Commune.

Even during the siege we had been able to follow the first developments of the new revolutionary movement. We knew of the insubordination displayed by certain circles of political extremists toward the governor of Paris. When the armistice was concluded the revolutionary movement began to show its head even more openly. Bismarck had said to the French plenipotentiaries: "You came by revolution and a second revolution will sweep you away." It looked as if he were going to be right.

Speaking generally, our interest in this revolution was small at first. It was only from the beginning of March, when the Commune began to get the upper hand and the development of events seemed to point to an open conflict between Paris and Versailles, that we paid more attention. And now while German corps isolated the capital of France on the north and east, in a certain sense as

the allies of the government troops, the latter began their long and weary attack on Paris from the south and west. Events outside the walls of the fortress could best be followed from the heights above the Seine at Sannois, four miles northwest of Paris. Certain commercially minded Frenchmen had established telescopes there which they allowed, on payment, any German soldier to use who wished to see the drama of a civil war. I myself made no use of these facilities, but contented myself with getting a peep at what was going on in Paris from a top window in the Cerf d'Or Hôtel at St.-Denis (when I reported for the daily orders there), or when I went out riding on the island in the Seine by St.-Denis. Tremendous fires from the end of April revealed the track of the fighting in the center of the town. I remember that on May 23d, in particular, I had the impression that the whole of the inner quarters of Paris was threatened with destruction.

Refugees painted the situation in the city in the most lurid colors, and the facts did not seem in any way to fall short of the descriptions. Arson, looting, the murder of hostages, in short all those diseases (now called Bolshevism) which are symptomatic of a body politic broken in war, were already of common occurrence. The threat of a released Communist leader, "The government hasn't the courage to have me shot, but I shall have

the courage to shoot the government," seemed about to be put into practice. How completely the once so strong and sensitive national feeling of the French had been extinguished by the Communists is shown by the following declaration, "We glory in bayoneting our government in the back under the enemy's nose." It will be seen that the Bolshevik system for the regeneration of the world, the system of which we, too, have had recent experience, cannot even lay claim to originality.

At long last I saw the end of the Commune one day from my top window in St.-Denis. Outside the main walls of Paris government troops surrounded Montmartre, and from its northern declivity, then unbuilt on, stormed the commanding height which was the last bulwark of the insurgents.

It seems to me a bitter irony of fate that the only political party in Europe which then glorified the movement, in complete ignorance of the true facts as I must presume, is to-day compelled to take the sharpest measures against Bolshevik attempts in our own Fatherland. It is a further proof of what doctrinaire prejudice can lead to until corrected by practical experience.

With the warning example of the events I have just described before our eyes we turned our backs on the French capital at the beginning of June, and after three days in the train reached our happy, victorious Fatherland.

This time the entry into Berlin was made from the Tempelhofer Feld. For the occasion representatives of all the German troops were present in addition to the Guard Corps. My hope of a third triumphal entry through the Brandenburg Gate, a hope I long cherished, not for my own sake, but for that of my Kaiser and King and my country, was not to be fulfilled!

CHAPTER III

WORK IN PEACE TIME

WITH a rich fund of experiences in every military sphere we had returned home from French soil. With the single Fatherland we had created a single army, the fundamental form of which was only affected superficially by the demands of state particularism. Uniformity of military plans was now assured as effectively as uniformity of organization, armament, and training. It was in the natural course of German development that Prussian experience and the Prussian system should have decisive weight in the reconstruction of the army.

Peace training was again resumed in all quarters. For the next few years I was still employed on regimental duty. I then followed my own inclination for a higher military training, sat for the *Kriegs-akademie*, and was duly accepted in 1873.

The first year did not quite come up to my expectations. Instead of studying military history and the lessons of recent battles we were mostly regaled on the history of the art of war and the

tactics of earlier days. These were secondary matters. In addition we were compelled to take mathematics, which only a few of us would require later in the form of trigonometry in the Survey Department. It was only with the last two years and his posting to other arms that the ambitious young officer could be completely satisfied. Then it was that my horizon was materially extended, thanks to the guidance of splendid teachers—of whom I must mention, in addition to Major von Wittich, Colonel Ketzler and Captain Villaume of the General Staff, as well as the historians Geheimrat Duncker and Professor Richter—and in company with gifted contemporaries such as the later Field-Marshal von Bülow and von Eichorn as well as the later General von Bernhardt.

The many-sided social life of Berlin also comes into the picture. I had the honor to be invited into the exclusive circle of His Royal Highness Prince Alexander of Prussia, and thereby came into touch not only with leading soldiers, but also with men of science as well as those in the state and court service.

When my time at the *Kriegsakademie* came to an end I first returned to my regiment at Hanover for six months, and then in the spring of 1877 was attached to the General Staff.

In April, 1878, my transfer to the General Staff followed, and I was promoted to the rank of cap-

tain. A few weeks later I was posted to the Headquarters Staff of the Second Army Corps at Stettin. My military career outside regimental duty begins at this point, for subsequently I was only twice employed with troops until I was appointed to the command of a division.

The General Staff was certainly one of the most remarkable structures within the framework of our German army. Side by side with the distinctly hierarchical form of the commands it constituted a special element which had its foundation in the great intellectual prestige of the Chief of Staff of the Army, Field-Marshal Count von Moltke. The peace training of the General Staff officer offered a guaranty that in case of war all the commanders in the field should be controlled from a single source and all their plans governed by a common aim. The influence of the General Staff on those commanders was not regulated by any binding order. It depended far more on the military and personal qualities of the individual officer. The first requirement of the General Staff officer was that he should keep his own personality and actions entirely in the background. He had to work out of sight, and therefore be more than he seemed to be.

I believe that, taking it all round, the German General Staff has known how to perform its extraordinarily difficult tasks. Its achievements were masterly to the last, though there may have

been mistakes and failures in individual cases. I could imagine no more honorable testimony in its favor than the fact that the enemy has demanded its dissolution in the peace conditions.

It has been suggested in many quarters that there was something mysterious about the work of the General Staff. Nothing more preposterous could be imagined. As has been the case with all our military achievements, those of the General Staff are the result of the application of sound reasoning to the immediate problem in hand. Accordingly, it is often necessary for the General Staff officer to turn his attention to all sorts of trivial affairs, as well as to high military questions. I have known many most gifted officers who failed in this respect, and were therefore useless as General Staff officers, or proved themselves a positive disadvantage to the troops in that capacity.

As I was the youngest staff officer at Corps Headquarters I was naturally mainly occupied with these smaller matters. That was very disappointing for me at first, but then I subsequently acquired a love for the work, because I recognized its importance for the execution of the larger plans and the welfare of the troops. It was only in the annual General Staff rides that I had a chance of interesting myself in higher matters, in my capacity as the handy man of the corps commander. At this time I also took part in the first Fortress Gen-

eral Staff ride at Königsberg, conducted by General Count Waldersee, Chief of Staff of the Tenth Army Corps. My corps commander was Gen. Hans von Weyherra, an experienced soldier who had fought in the service of Schleswig-Holstein in his youth, commanded a cavalry division in 1866, and an infantry division in 1870-71. It was a real pleasure to see the old officer, a magnificent rider, on horseback in the uniform of his Blücher Hussars. To both my Chiefs of Staff, Colonel von Petersdorff at first, and then Lieutenant-Colonel von Zingler, I owe my thanks for a thorough training in practical General Staff work.

In the year 1879 the Second Corps had Kaiser maneuvers, and received the thanks of His Majesty. It was on this occasion that I met the Russian General Skobelev, who was then at the pinnacle of his fame after the war with Turkey. He gave me the impression of a man of ruthless energy, alert of mind, and undoubtedly a very efficient higher commander. His habit of boasting was a less pleasant characteristic.

I must not omit from my story the fact that I had been married at Stettin. My wife, too, is a soldier's child, being the daughter of General von Sperling, who was Chief of Staff of the Sixth Corps in 1866 and Chief of Staff of the First Army in 1870-71. He had died after the war with France.

I found in my wife a loving mate, who shared

with me loyally and untiringly my joys and sorrows, my cares and labors. She presented me with a son and two daughters. The son did his duty in the Great War as an officer on the General Staff. Both daughters are married, and their husbands likewise fought in the Great War.

In 1881 I was transferred to the First Division at Königsberg. This change gave me greater independence, brought me into closer contact with the troops, and took me back to my native province.

Of the events of my military life there I must specially mention the fact that the well-known military writer, General von Verdy du Vernois, was for a time my general.

The general was a highly gifted and interesting personality. As a result of his wealth of experience in high staff posts during the wars of 1866 and 1870-71, he possessed an extraordinary knowledge of the decisive events of that period. Further, he had previously been attached to the headquarters of the Russian army in Warsaw during the Polish rising of 1863, and had thus gained a deep insight into the political conditions on our eastern frontier. What he had to tell about his life—and he had brilliant powers of description—was, therefore, extremely instructive, not only from the military, but also from the political point of view. General von Verdy was a pioneer in the domain of applied

war technics. Under his guidance and in the mutual exchange of ideas I learned very much that was to be useful to me later on when I was myself teaching at the *Kriegsakademie*. This brilliant man thus had a most inspiring influence upon me in many directions. He was always a kind superior who gave me his fullest confidence.

I have also grateful memories of Colonel von Bartenwerffer, the Chief of Staff of my corps at that time. His General Staff rides and exercises for the winter syllabus of the General Staff were masterly conceptions, and his criticisms were particularly instructive.

After three years on the staff of the First Division I was transferred to the command of a company in the Fifty-eighth Infantry Regiment, stationed at Fraustadt in Posen.

In this return to regimental duty I was taking charge of a company which was recruited almost exclusively from Poles. I thus learned to know the very great difficulties which the ignorance of officers and men of one another's tongue placed in the way of a good understanding between them. I myself did not know Polish except for a few expressions which I had picked up in childhood. It was thus very difficult for me to have any influence on the company, and it was made even more difficult by the fact that the men were distributed in thirty-three civilian billets, even in-

cluding the windmills on the outskirts of the town. Taking it all round, however, my experiences with Polish recruits were not unfortunate. The men were industrious, willing, and—what I must particularly emphasize—devoted so long as I bore in mind their difficulties in learning their work and also did all I could for their welfare. At that time I considered that the somewhat marked frequency of cases of theft and drunkenness among the Poles was due far less to any moral inferiority than to unsatisfactory training in early years. It is a matter of sincere regret that I have been compelled to revise my favorable opinion of the Poles of Posen since I have heard of all the horrors which the insurgents have perpetrated upon non-combatants. I could never have expected that from the countrymen of my old Fusiliers!

My thoughts travel back pleasantly, even to-day, to the time, unfortunately only five years and a quarter, when I was commanding a company. For the first time I was familiarized with life in a small, semirural garrison. Besides the comrades of my circle I found a kind welcome in the neighboring estates, and I was once again in direct contact with the men. I admit I took great pains to know the peculiarities of each individual, and thus knit a firm bond between myself and those under me. For that reason I found it very hard to part from my company, in spite of the apparent

advantages my recall to the General Staff brought me.

This event occurred in the summer of 1885, when I was transferred to the Great General Staff. A few weeks later I was a major. I was in the department of Col. Count von Schlieffen, subsequently General and Chief of the General Staff of the army, but I was also placed at the disposal of the department of Col. Vogel von Falkenstein, who was subsequently corps commander of the Eighth Army Corps, and then director of the Corps of Engineers and Pioneers. In this latter department I co-operated for more than a year in the first working out of the Field Service Regulations, a fundamental code of instruction issued by His Majesty's command. I thus came into touch with the most distinguished departmental heads of that time.

In the spring of 1886 His Royal Highness Prince William of Prussia took part in the maneuvers at Zossen, which lasted several days. These were intended to provide a practical test of the soundness of the new regulations before they were actually introduced. It was the first time I had the honor of meeting him who later was to be my Kaiser, King, and master, William II. In the following winter the Prince attended a war game of the Great General Staff. On this occasion I was the commander of the "Russian army."

It was in these years that Field-Marshal Count von Moltke handed over all direct business with the departments of the Great General Staff to his assistant, General Count Waldersee. But in spite of the change his spirit and prestige still governed everything. No special guaranty was required that Count Moltke should at all times be held in infinite honor, or that any of us could forget his wonderful influence.

In the circumstances I have described, I myself seldom came into immediate official contact with the Field-Marshal, but I was fortunate enough to meet him unofficially from time to time. At a dinner party in the house of Prince Alexander I once witnessed a scene which throws an interesting light both on his views and on his personality. After dinner we were looking at a picture by Camphausen, representing the meeting of Prince Frederick Charles with the Crown Prince, on the battlefield of Königgrätz. General von Winterfeldt, who was present, told us from his personal knowledge that at the moment of the meeting Prince Frederick Charles had said to the Crown Prince, "Thank God you've come, Fritz, or it would probably have gone hard with me." As Winterfeldt said this, Count Moltke, who was just then choosing a cigar, came up to us in three great strides and said, very emphatically: "The Prince needn't have said that. He knew quite well that the Crown Prince had

been summoned and was to be expected on the battlefield about midday, so that victory was certain." With these words the Field-Marshal returned to the cigars.

On the occasion of the Emperor's birthday the generals and officers of the General Staff were the guests of the Field-Marshal. At one of these gatherings one of the gentlemen asserted that Moltke's toast of the Kaiser would not contain more than ten words, including the speech and the first "Hoch." Bets were laid. I myself did not take any part. The gentleman who took the bet lost, for the Field-Marshal merely said, "*Meine Herrn, der Kaiser hoch*" ("Gentlemen, hoch der Kaiser.") Words which were certainly enough in our circle, and coming from such a mouth. The same bet was to have been made the next year, but the other side would not close. He would have won this time, for Count Moltke said, "*Meine Herrn, Seine Majestat der Kaiser und Königer lebe hoch.*" ("Gentlemen, I give you the toast of His Majesty the Kaiser and King.") That makes eleven words with the first "Hoch."

On the other hand, in the ordinary relations of life, Count Moltke was not at all uncommunicative, but a charming and challenging conversationalist with a great sense of humor.

In the year 1891 I saw the Field-Marshal for the last time—it was on his deathbed. I was per-

mitted to see him the morning after he had passed peacefully away. He lay in his coffin as if asleep and without his usual wig, so that his splendid head could be seen to perfection; only a laurel wreath round his temples was wanted to complete the picture of an ideal Cæsar head. How many great thoughts had emanated from that brain! What a lofty idealism had had its seat there! What nobility of mind had dwelt there to work unselfishly for the welfare of our Fatherland and its sovereign! In my opinion, our people have not since produced his equal in intellect and character. Yes, Moltke's greatness was unique in its combination of these qualities.

Our first Emperor—a great Emperor—had left us three years before. I took part in the vigil in the cathedral, and was permitted to render the last services there to my imperial and royal master, whom I so dearly loved. My thoughts took me through Memel, Königgrätz, and Sedan, to Versailles. They culminated in the memory of a Sunday in the previous year on which I had stood under the historic corner window of the Imperial Palace in the midst of a jubilant throng. Carried away by the general enthusiasm, I held up my five-year-old son and showed him our aged master, with the words, "If you never forget this moment as long as you live you will always do right." The great soul of a great man and sovereign had de-

parted to the comrades to whom he had sent his greeting a few years before by the dying Field-Marshal Von Roon.

There is a block of gray marble on my desk. It comes from the very spot in the old cathedral on which the coffin of my Emperor had been laid. No more valued present could have been made to me. I need not attempt to clothe in words the thoughts which rise within me, even to-day, when I look at that piece of stone.

His son, the Emperor Frederick, Germany's pride and hope, was permitted to reign for but a short time. He died of an incurable disease a few months after his father. The Great General Staff was then away on a General Staff ride in East Prussia. We therefore took the oath to His Majesty the Emperor and King, William II, in Gumbinnen. I thus pledged my fealty to my present war lord in the same spot at which, twenty-six years later, I was to translate it into action.

Fate was kind to me in that I found a very great variety of employment within the General Staff. Even while I was attached to the Great General Staff I was assigned the duty of teaching tactics at the *Kriegsakademie*. I derived great pleasure from this work, and continued it for five years. It is true that the demands on me were very great, as in addition to this I had to do other work simul-

taneously, both in the Great General Staff and subsequently as the first General Staff officer with the Headquarters Staff of the Third Army Corps. In these circumstances the day of twenty-four hours often seemed too short. It was quite usual for me to work the whole night through.

I got to know many gifted young officers who justified the brightest hopes, during this period when I was teaching at the *Akademie*. Many of their names now belong to history; I can only mention here Lauenstein, Luttwitz, Freytag-Loringhoven, Stein, and Hutier. Two Turkish General Staff officers were also under me for about two years at this time—Schakir Bey and Tewfik Effendi. The first became a marshal in his own country, the second a general.

At the Headquarters Staff of the Third Corps my general was General von Bronsart the younger, a very gifted officer who had been employed on the General Staff in 1866 and 1870-71, and subsequently, like his elder brother, became War Minister.

My transfer to the War Ministry in 1889 brought me a totally different sphere of work. I there took over a section of the Common War Department. This change is attributable to the circumstance that my former divisional general, General von Verdy, had become War Minister, and summoned me to the Ministry when he remodeled

it. I was therefore director of a section when I was still a major.

Although at the start this change did not correspond to my wishes and inclinations, I subsequently attached a very high value to the experience I gained by my occupation with affairs and a sphere of work which had hitherto been unknown to me. I had plenty of opportunity of becoming acquainted with formality and red tape (which are scarcely altogether avoidable) and the bureaucratic attitude of the minor officials. But I also came to realize the strong sense of duty with which everyone was imbued, though working at the highest pressure.

The most stimulating part of my work was the issue of field-engineering regulations, and the initiation of the use of heavy artillery in an ordinary action. Both stood the test of the Great War.

Everything that was done, in peace as well as—and more particularly—in the recent war, deserves the highest recognition. But only a calm, judicial and expert investigation will confirm the justness of that view.

But although I came to realize that my employment at the War Ministry had been extremely valuable to me, I was none the less very glad to be freed from the bureaucratic yoke when I was appointed to the command of the Ninety-first Infantry Regiment at Oldenburg in 1893.

The position of commander of a regiment is the finest in the army. The commander sets the stamp of his personality on the regiment, and it is the regiment which carries on tradition in the army. The training of his officers, not only in service, but also in social matters, and the control and supervision of the training of the troops are his most important tasks. I endeavored to cultivate a sense of chivalry among my officers, and efficiency and firm discipline in my battalions. I also fostered the love of work and independence side by side with a high ideal of service. The fact that infantry, artillery, and cavalry were all comprised in the garrison gave me an opportunity for frequent exercises with combined arms.

Their Royal Highnesses the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess were very gracious to me, and the same applies to the heir and his wife. Indeed, I found a kindly reception everywhere, and thoroughly enjoyed myself in the gardenlike town. The quiet, homely character of the Oldenburg people appealed to me. I have pleasant and grateful memories of my time among them. By the favor of my Emperor, on my seventieth birthday I was once more, to my great joy, brought into touch with my old regiment by being placed *à la suite*. So I can still call myself an Oldenburger to-day.

On my appointment, in 1896, as Chief of Staff to the Eighth Army Corps at Coblenz I came for

the first time into close contact with our Rhine provinces. The high spirits and friendly attitude of the Rhinelanders were particularly pleasant to me. To tell the truth, I had to get used to their habit of sliding over the serious questions of life, as also to their temperament, which is more sentimental than that of the North Germans. The course of our historical development and the difference in geographical and economic conditions entirely explain certain contrasts of thought and feeling. But the view that this involves the necessity of separating the Rhineland from Prussia seems to me an outrage and base ingratitude.

The merry life on the Rhine had me, too, under its spell, and I spent many a happy time there.

At the start my general was General von Falkenstein, who was known to me when I was at the Great General Staff as the head of a section, and also at the War Ministry as the director of my department. However, he was soon succeeded by His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Baden.

I was to stand at the side of this royal officer for three and a half years. I remember these years as among the best of my life. His noble mind, in which dignity united with charming cordiality, his typically unflagging sense of duty combined with his soldierly manner and talents, quickly won him the affection and confidence of all his subordinates as well as of the Rhenish population.

It was while I was Chief of Staff that the Eighth Corps had Kaiser maneuvers in 1897. His Majesty the Kaiser and King was satisfied with what he saw both at the review and in the field. The festivities at Coblenz were also marked by the unveiling of the monument to the Emperor William I at the "German Quadrangle," that beautiful spot at which the Moselle joins the Rhine opposite the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein.

As the result of my employment for nearly four years as chief of an army corps I was so advanced in seniority that there was now no question of my appointment to the command of an infantry brigade. At the conclusion of that period I was therefore appointed to the command of the Twenty-eighth Division at Karlsruhe in 1900.

I obeyed this command, emanating from His Majesty, with quite special satisfaction. My previous official relations with the Grand Duke's heir secured me the lasting good will of Their Royal Highnesses the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess, a good will which was extended to my wife and made us very happy. In addition, we had the splendid country of Baden, with all its natural beauties and its warm-hearted inhabitants, and Karlsruhe with all its wealth of art and science, not to mention its society, less concerned with details, which embraced all professional circles.

In the division all three arms were united for

the first time under one command. The duties of a divisional commander are, therefore, more varied, and demand a sphere of activity which is principally concerned with the great business of war.

With a feeling of deep gratitude I left Karlsruhe in January, 1905, when the confidence of my All-Highest War Lord summoned me to the command of the Fourth Army Corps.

In assuming my new duties I took over a position of unlimited responsibility, a position which is usually held longer than other military posts and on which the holder, like the commander of a regiment, sets the stamp of his personality. I myself pursued the principles that had previously guided me, and I think I may claim some success. The affection of my subordinates, to which I had always attached high importance as one of the main-springs of efficiency, was, at any rate, expressed in the most moving way when I left this splendid post after eight and a quarter years. As early as the first year I had the honor to present my army corps to His Majesty in the Kaiser maneuvers, which began with a review on the battlefield of Rossbach. His Majesty expressed his gratitude, which I gladly attributed to my predecessors and my troops.

I had the distinction of being presented to Her Majesty the Empress during these maneuvers.

This first meeting was to be followed by others in more serious times, when I could appreciate more and more how much this noble lady meant to her exalted husband, her Fatherland, and myself.

In my time the Fourth Army Corps was in the army inspection of His Royal Highness Prince Leopold of Bavaria. In him I knew a superb leader and splendid soldier. We were to meet again later in the Eastern theater of war. The Prince then placed himself under my orders, in the most generous manner, in the interests of the whole situation, although he was substantially senior to me in the service.

In December, 1908, at His Majesty's command I and the then General von Bülow, whose corps also belonged to the army inspection of the Prince, took part at Munich in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the entry of His Royal Highness into the service. On this occasion we had the honor to be most graciously received by His Royal Highness the venerable Prince Regent Leopold.

Magdeburg, our station, is often not appreciated as it should be by those who do not know it. It is a fine old town, and its "Broad Way" and venerable cathedral ought to be of great interest to sight-seers. Since its fortifications were dismantled their place has been taken by imposing suburbs fulfilling all modern requirements. Extensive

parks have been laid out to make up for what the country round Magdeburg lacks in natural beauties. Theaters, concerts, museums, and lectures see to the representation of art and science. It will thus be seen that it is possible to have a pleasant time there when off duty, especially if as agreeable society is available as fell to our lot.

Social life in the town was supplemented by social life at the courts of Brunswick, Dessau, and Altenburg, as well as at numerous country houses. It would take too long to mention them all by name. But I have particularly grateful memories of our annual several days' visit to my venerable and fatherly friend, General Count von Wartensleben, now ninety years of age, at Carow.

Nor was there any lack of sport. Quite apart from the well-known excellent hare and pheasant shooting to be obtained in the province of Saxony, the court hunting at Letzlingen, Mosugkau near Dessau, Blankenberg in the Hartz, and Altenburg, as well as drives and deer stalking on several private estates, guaranteed us plenty of wild boar, fallow deer, red deer, roe deer, and game shooting.

All this time the resolution to retire from the army was taking shape in my mind. My military career had carried me much farther than I had ever dared to hope. There was no prospect of war,

and as I recognized that it was my duty to make way for younger men, I applied in the year 1911 to be allowed to retire. As the hand of legend has descended upon this unimportant event also, I declare emphatically that this step was not the result of any disagreement, whether of an official or private nature.

It was anything but easy for me to put an end to a relationship that had lasted for years, a relationship that was very dear to me, and more especially to part from my Fourth Corps, for which I had a great affection. But it had to be! I never suspected that within a few years I should gird on the sword again and, like my men, be permitted to serve my army corps, my Emperor and Empire, my King and Fatherland once again.

In the course of my career I have learned to know almost all the German tribes. I believe I am, therefore, in a position to judge what a wealth of the most valuable qualities our nation has at its disposal, and to say that hardly any other country in the world possesses, in the versatility of its people, so many conditions precedent to an abounding intellectual and moral life as Germany.

CHAPTER IV

RETIREMENT

I HAD said farewell to service on the active list with a feeling of loyal gratitude to my Emperor and King, with the warmest wishes for his army, and in full confidence in the future of our Fatherland. But at heart I always remained the soldier.

Thanks to the wealth of experience I had gained in every department of my profession, I could look back gratefully and feel satisfied with what I had done in the past. There was nothing that could cloud the vision over which lay the magic of youthful dreams come true. My voluntary retirement was, therefore, not without a certain feeling of homesickness for the life I had left behind me, nor without many a longing to be back in the army. In the peace of my new life my hope that my Emperor would again summon me if danger threatened the Fatherland, my wish to devote the last ounce of my strength to his service, lost nothing of their force.

At the time I left the army an extraordinarily

strong intellectual wave was sweeping over it. The invigorating contest between the old and the new, between ruthless progress and careful conservatism, was reconciled to a happy medium in the practical experiences of the recent war. In spite of the new path which those experiences opened to us, they leave no doubt that with all the increased importance to be attached to material in war, the value of the training and moral education of the soldier is as high as ever. Stout-hearted action has maintained its precedence over all the refinements of intellect. Presence of mind and strength of character take a higher place in war than fertility of ideas. Weapons of destruction have been brought to perfection, but war has none the less preserved its simple—I might almost say coarse—forms. It tolerated no weaknesses of human nature and permitted no fastidiousness in military training. What it demanded as the primary necessity was that a man should be turned into a resolute personality.

In peace time a good many people believed that the army could be reproached with unproductivity. That reproach was perfectly justified if by unproductivity the creation of material values was meant. But it was certainly false if productivity was regarded from the higher, moral point of view. Everyone who does not, either from prejudice or from mere spite, condemn our military work in

peace time offhand, must admit that the army is the finest school for will and action. How many thousands of men have first learned under its influence of what physical and moral feats they were capable, and acquired that self-confidence and inward strength that have never left them through life! Where have the idea of equality and the sense of unity among our people found more striking expression than in the all-leveling school of our great national army? In the army the human inclination to unlimited egotism, with its tendency to disintegrate society and the state, is blessedly purified and transformed by the rigid self-discipline of the individual for the good of the whole. The army trained and strengthened that mighty organizing impulse which we found everywhere in our Fatherland, in the domain of politics as in that of science, in trade as in technical studies, in industry as in the labor world, in agriculture as in the professions. The conviction that the subordination of the individual to the good of the community was not only a necessity, but a positive blessing, had gripped the mind of the German army, and through it that of the German nation. It was only thus that the colossal feats were possible which were needed, and which we performed under the stress of dire necessity and against a world of enemies.

On the battlefields of Europe, Asia, and Africa,

the German officer and the German soldier have given proof that our training was on right lines. Even if the long duration of the last war with its multiplicity of impressions had a demoralizing effect on some natures, even if the moral principles of others were confused by the unnerving action of mental and physical overstrain, and characters, hitherto blameless, succumbed to the many temptations, the true core of the army remained sound and worthy of its task in spite of the unprecedented strain.

The reproach has often been cast at the old army that it endeavored to degrade a free man into an automaton. But the battlefields of the Great War have shown what a strengthening influence our training has had even in the midst of the disintegrating influences of incessant fighting. Innumerable glorious and yet terrible events have shown to what heights of voluntary heroism the German soldier can rise, not because he says, "I must," but because he says, "I can."

It is inherent in the course of events that with the dissolution of the old army new paths for the training of the nation and its defensive forces should be demanded. As regards that demand I stand by the old, tried principles. Even if there are some who do not consider there is anything final about the means by which we are to recover the power to repeat our former achievements, they

will certainly agree with me, at least in this, that it is vital for the future of our Fatherland that we should recover that power. If not, it means that we should renounce our position in the world, and let ourselves be degraded to the role of the anvil because we have neither the courage nor the resolution to be the hammer when the hour comes.

The question how we are to recover the great school of organization and energy which we possessed in our old army is possibly a fateful one, not only for the future political prosperity of our German homeland, but even for its economic welfare. Germany can recover and succeed as easily as any other country on earth, and maintain a tolerable place in the world, but only by putting forth and concentrating all her creative energies. Unfortunately, there is a marked reaction against the existing strong order, thanks to the disintegrating influences of an unsuccessful war and the fallacious idea that the subordination of all the national forces to one controlling will could not have prevented the disaster to the Fatherland. Resentment against the ancient voluntary or compulsory subjection burst the old barriers, and wandered aimlessly in new paths. Can we hope for success along these lines? Hitherto we have lost far more in moral and ethical values from the effects of political dissolution than from the war

itself. If we do not soon create new educative forces, if we continue to exhaust the spiritual and moral soil of our nation as we have done hitherto, we shall soon convert the foundations of our political existence to a barren waste!

Part II

THE CAMPAIGN IN THE EAST



CHAPTER V

THE STRUGGLE FOR EAST PRUSSIA

I

The Outbreak of War and My Recall

THE unruffled course of my life after the year 1911 gave me a chance to devote my spare time to following political events in the world. What I thus saw was not indeed of a nature likely to fill me with satisfaction. I was not in the least anxious, but I could not get rid of a certain oppressive feeling. I was in a sense forced to the conclusion that we were venturing into the distant ocean of world politics before our foundations in Europe itself had been sufficiently secured. Whether the political storm-clouds hung over Morocco or gathered over the Balkans, I shared with the majority of my countrymen a vague feeling that our German foundations were being undermined. In recent years we had unquestionably been in the presence of one of those chauvinistic waves which seemed to recur at regular intervals in France. Their origin was known. They

found their support in Russia or England—or both—quite indifferent to who or what was the open or secret, known or unknown driving force there.

I have never ignored the special difficulties with which German foreign policy has been faced. The dangers involved in our geographical situation, our economic necessities, and last, but not least, our frontier provinces with their mixed nationalities, stared us in the face. The policy of our enemies, which succeeded in reconciling all their jealousies against us, did not, in my opinion, require a high degree of skill. In the long run it was mainly responsible for the war. We neglected to make preparations to meet that danger. From the point of view of procuring allies our policy seemed to be inspired more by a code of honor than a proper regard for the needs of our people and our world situation.

When, even in the 'nineties, a subsequent German Chancellor considered he had to regard the progressive decay of the Danube Monarchy, our ally, as obvious, it is inconceivable that our statesmen should not have drawn the appropriate inferences.

I have always had the liveliest sympathy with the German-Austrian members of our race. All of us have thoroughly understood the difficulties of their position in their Fatherland. But in my

opinion this feeling of ours was exploited far too freely by Austro-Hungarian politicians.

The "Nibelung Compact" was certainly solemn enough at the time it was made. It could not, however, blind us to the fact that in the Bosnian crisis, the occasion on which the phrase was coined, Austria-Hungary had precipitately dragged us after her, without that previous understanding due to an ally, and then summoned us to cover her rear. It was clear that we could not abandon our allies at that juncture. It would simply have meant that we strengthened the Russian colossus, with the prospect of being crushed by it all the more certainly and irresistibly in the long run.

To me as a soldier, the contrast between Austria-Hungary's political claims and her domestic and military resources was particularly striking.

To meet the huge armaments with which Russia had restored her position after the war in eastern Asia we Germans had certainly increased our defenses, but we had not required the same measures of our Austro-Hungarian allies. It may have been a simple matter for the statesmen of the Danube Monarchy to meet all our suggestions for the increase of Austro-Hungarian armaments with a recital of their domestic difficulties, but how was it that we found no means of presenting Austria-Hungary with a definite alternative in this matter? We already knew of the enormous numerical

superiority of our prospective enemies. Ought we to have permitted our allies to make no use of a large part of their national resources available for the common defense? What advantage was it for us to have Austria-Hungary as a bulwark far to the southeast, when this bulwark was cracked at points innumerable and did not dispose of enough defenders to man its walls?

From the earliest times it seemed to me doubtful to rely on any effective help from Italy. It was an uncertain quantity; questionable even if the Italian statesmen favored the idea. We had had an excellent opportunity of realizing the weaknesses of the Italian army in the war in Tripoli. Since that war the situation of Italy had improved but little, thanks to the shaky condition of its finances. In any case, it was not ready to strike.

It was along such lines that my thoughts and anxieties moved in those years. I had already had two personal experiences of war, on both occasions under strong and resolute political leadership combined with clear and straightforward military objectives. I was not afraid of war. I am not afraid of it now! But besides its uplifting influence, I knew its wholesale encroachment upon every side of human activity too well not to wish that it should be avoided as long as possible.

And now the war was upon us! The hopelessness of our prospects of compromising with France

on the basis of the *status quo*, soothing England's commercial jealousy, and fear of rivalry and satisfying Russia's greed without breaking faith with our Austrian ally, had long created a feeling of tension in Germany, compared with which the outbreak of war was felt almost as a release from a perpetual burden we had carried all our lives.

Then came the imperial summons to arms, and with it a proud army of whose efficiency the world had seldom seen the like. The hearts of the whole nation must have beat faster at the very sight of it. Yet there was no vainglorious boasting, in view of the task which faced it. As neither Bismarck nor Moltke had left us in any doubt as to what such a war would mean, every intelligent man asked himself whether we should be in a position to hold out, politically, economically, and morally, as well as in a military sense.

But confidence was unquestionably stronger than doubt.

The news of the bursting of the storm broke in upon this train of thought and reflection. The soldier within me sprang to life again and dominated everything else. Would my Emperor and King need me? Exactly a year had passed without my receiving any official intimation of this kind. Enough younger men seemed available. I put myself in the hands of Fate and waited in longing expectation.

II

To the Front

The homeland listened in suspense.

The news from the various theaters of war realized our hopes and wishes. Liège had fallen, the action at Mülhausen had come to a victorious conclusion, and our right wing and center were passing through Belgium. The first news of the victory in Lorraine was just reaching the country, rejoicing all hearts. In the East, too, the trumpets of victory were sounding. Nowhere had anything happened which seemed to justify any anxiety.

At three o'clock in the afternoon of August 22d I received an inquiry from the Headquarters of His Majesty the Emperor as to whether I was prepared for immediate employment.

My answer ran: "I am ready."

Even before this telegram could have reached Main Headquarters I received another. It was to the effect that my willingness to accept a post in the field was assumed as a matter of course, and informed me that General Ludendorff was to be assigned to me. Further telegrams from Main Headquarters explained that I was to leave for the East immediately to take command of an army.

About three o'clock in the morning I went to the

station, imperfectly equipped, as time had been short, and waited expectantly in the well-lit hall. It was only when the short special train steamed in that I wrenched my thoughts away from the hearth and home which I had had to leave so suddenly. General Ludendorff stepped briskly from the train and reported as my Chief of Staff of the Eighth Army.

Before that moment the general had been a stranger to me, and I had not yet heard of his feats at Liège. He first explained the situation on the Eastern Front to me as communicated to him on August 22d at Main Headquarters (Coblenz) by Colonel-General von Moltke, Chief of the General Staff. It appeared that the operations of the Eighth Army in East Prussia had taken the following course: At the opening of hostilities the army had left the Twentieth Army Corps, strengthened by fortress garrisons and other Landwehr formations, in a position covering the southern frontier of East and West Prussia from the Vistula to the Lötzen Lakes. The main body of the army (First and Seventeenth Army Corps, First Reserve Corps, Third Reserve Division, the garrison of Königsberg, and the First Cavalry Division) had been concentrated on the Eastern frontier of East Prussia, and had there attacked the Russian Niemen Army, which was advancing under General Rennenkampf. There had been an action at Stallu-

pönen on August 17th, and another at Gumbinnen on the 19th and 20th. During the battle at Gumbinnen news had been received of the approach of the Russian Narew Army, under General Samsonoff, toward the German frontier between Soldau and Willenberg. The commander of our Eighth Army had therefore reason to expect that the Russians would have crossed that stretch of the frontier by the 20th. In view of this threat to their communications from the south, the Headquarters Staff broke off the action at Gumbinnen and reported to Main Headquarters that they were not in a position to hold the country east of the Vistula any longer.

General von Moltke had not approved of that decision. It was his opinion that an attempt must be made to destroy the Narew Army before we could think of abandoning East Prussia, so important from the military, economic, and political point of view. The conflict between the views of Main Headquarters and those of the Army Headquarters Staff had necessitated a change in the command of the Eighth Army.

At the moment the situation of this army appeared to be as follows: It had successfully shaken off the enemy. The First Army Corps and the Third Reserve Division were moving west by rail, while the First Reserve Corps and the Seventeenth Army Corps were marching for the line of the Vis-

tula. The Twentieth Army Corps was still in its positions on the frontier.

Before long I and my new Chief of Staff were at one in our view of the situation. Even while at Coblenz General Ludendorff had been able to issue such preliminary orders as brooked no delay, orders intended to secure the continuance of operations east of the Vistula. The most important of these was that the First Army Corps should not be brought too far west, but directed on Deutsch-Eylau—that is, toward the enemy and behind the right wing of the Twentieth Corps.

Everything else must and could be left for decision when we reached Army Headquarters at Marienburg.

Our conference had taken scarcely more than half an hour. We then went to bed. I made thoroughly good use of the time at my disposal.

We thus traveled together toward a joint future, fully conscious how serious the situation was and yet with perfect confidence in our Lord God, our brave troops, and last, but not least, in one another. From now on we were to be united for years in common thought and action.

At this point I may well say something about my relations with General Ludendorff, then Chief of Staff and subsequently First Quartermaster-General. It has been suggested that these relations find a parallel in those between Blücher and

Gneisenau. I will venture no opinion as to how far such a comparison reveals a departure from true historical perspective. As I have already said, I had myself held the post of Chief of Staff for several years. As I knew from my own experience, the relations between the Chief of Staff and his General, who has the responsibility, are not theoretically laid down in the German army. The way in which they work together and the degree to which their powers are complementary are much more a matter of personality. The boundaries of their respective powers are, therefore, not clearly demarcated. If the relations between the General and his Chief of Staff are what they ought to be, these boundaries are easily adjusted by soldierly and personal tact and the qualities of mind on both sides.

I myself have often characterized my relations with General Ludendorff as those of a happy marriage. In such a relationship how can a third party clearly distinguish the merits of the individuals? They are one in thought and action, and often what the one says is only the expression of the wishes and feelings of the other.

After I had learned the worth of General Ludendorff, and that was soon, I realized that one of my principal tasks was, as far as possible, to give free scope to the intellectual powers, the almost superhuman capacity for work and untiring reso-

lution of my Chief of Staff, and, if necessary, clear the way for him, the way in which our common desires and our common goal pointed—victory for our colors, the welfare of our Fatherland, and a peace worthy of the sacrifices our nation had made.

I had to show General Ludendorff that loyalty of a brother warrior which we had learned to find in German history from youth up, that loyalty in which our ethical philosophy is so rich. And indeed his work and his determination, his whole great personality, were truly worthy of such loyalty. Others may think what they like. For him, as for so many of our great and greatest men, the time will come one day when the whole nation will look to him in admiration. I can only hope that in an equally critical hour of trial our Fatherland may find such a man again, a man who is every bit a man, a host in himself, unapproachable and uncompromising, indeed, but created for a gigantic task if anyone ever was.

See how he was hated by his enemies, who rightly knew his worth!

The harmony of our military and political convictions formed the basis for our joint views as to the proper use of our resources. Differences of opinion were easily reconciled, without our relations being disturbed by a feeling of forced submission on either side. The hard work of my Chief

of Staff translated our thoughts and plans into action at our Army Headquarters, and later at Main Headquarters, when the responsibilities of that post were intrusted to us. His influence inspired everyone, and no one could escape it without running the risk of finding himself off the common path. How otherwise could the enormous task have been done, and full effect given to the driving force? Around us two gathered the wider circle of our colleagues, filled with a resolute, soldierly sense of duty, and well endowed with ideas. A feeling of deep thankfulness possesses me whenever I think of them!

III

Tannenberg

Early in the afternoon of August 23d we reached our headquarters at Marienburg. We thus entered the region east of the Vistula, which was to form the immediate theater of our operations. At this moment the situation at the front had undergone the following development:

The Twentieth Corps had been withdrawn from its positions on the frontier by Neidenburg, to Gilgenburg, and east of it. In touch with this corps on the west the garrisons of the fortresses of Thorn and Graudenz were along the frontier as far as the Vistula. The Third Division had arrived at Allen-

stein as a reinforcement for the Twentieth Army Corps. After considerable delay the entrainment of the First Army Corps for Deutsch-Eylau had begun. The Seventeenth Corps and the First Reserve Corps had reached the neighborhood of Gerdauen on foot. The First Cavalry Division was south of Insterburg, facing Rennenkampf's army. The garrison of Königsberg had passed through Insterburg in its retreat to the west. With a few exceptions there were no noteworthy bodies of infantry of Rennenkampf's Niemen Army on the west side of the Angerapp. Of the two Russian cavalry corps, one was reported close to Angerburg, the other west of Darkehmen. Of Samsonoff's Narew Army apparently one division had reached the neighborhood of Ortelsburg, while Johannisburg was said to be in the enemy's possession. For the rest, the main body of this army seemed to be still concentrating on the frontier, with its western wing at Mlawa.

In the pocketbook of a dead Russian officer a note had been found which revealed the intention of the enemy command. It told us that Rennenkampf's army was to pass the Masurian Lakes on the north and advance against the Insterburg-Angerburg line. It was to attack the German forces presumed to be behind the Angerapp, while the Narew Army was to cross the Lötzen-Ortelsburg line to take the Germans in flank,

The Russians were thus planning a concentric attack against the Eighth Army, but Samsonoff's army now already extended farther west than was originally intended.

What, indeed, could we do to meet this dangerous enemy scheme? It was dangerous less on account of the audacity of the conception than by reason of the strength in which it was to be carried out—at any rate, strength from the point of view of numbers. We could hope that it would be otherwise as regards strength of will. During the months of August and September Russia brought up no fewer than 800,000 men and 1,700 guns against East Prussia, for the defense of which we had only 210,000 German soldiers and 600 guns at our disposal.

Our countermeasures were simple. I will attempt to make the broad outlines of our plan clear to the reader, even if he is not an expert.

In the first place, we opposed a thin center to Samsonoff's solid mass. I say thin, not weak. For it was composed of men with hearts and wills of steel. Behind them were their homes, wives, and children, parents and relatives, and everything they had. It was the Twentieth Corps, brave East and West Prussians. This thin center might bend under the enemy's pressure, but it would not break. While this center was engaged, two important groups on its wings were to carry out the decisive attack.

The troops of the First Corps, reinforced by Landwehr—likewise sons of the threatened region—were brought for the battle from the right, the northwest, the troops of the Seventeenth Corps and the First Reserve Corps, with a Landwehr brigade, from the left, the north and northeast. These men of the Seventeenth Corps and the First Reserve Corps, as well as the Landwehr and Landsturm, also had behind them everything which made life worth living.

We had not merely to win a victory over Samsonoff. We had to annihilate him. Only thus could we get a free hand to deal with the second enemy, Rennenkampf, who was even then plundering and burning East Prussia. Only thus could we really and completely free our old Prussian land and be in a position to do something else which was expected of us—intervene in the mighty battle for a decision which was raging between Russia and our Austro-Hungarian ally in Galicia and Poland. If this first blow were not final the danger for our homeland would become like a lingering disease, the burnings and murders in East Prussia would remain unavenged, and our allies in the south would wait for us in vain.

It was thus a case for complete measures. Everything must be thrown in which could prove of the slightest use in maneuver warfare and could at all be spared. The fortresses of Graudenz and

Thorn disgorged yet more Landwehr fit for the field. Moreover, our Landwehr came from the trenches between the Masurian Lakes, which were covering our new operations in the east, and handed over the defense there to a smaller and diminishing number of Landsturm. Once we had won the battle in the field we should no longer need the fortresses of Thorn and Graudenz, and should be freed from anxieties as regards the defiles between the lakes.

Our cavalry division and the Königsberg garrison, with two Landwehr brigades, were to remain facing Rennenkampf, who might fall upon us like an avalanche from the northeast at any time. But at the moment we could not yet say whether these forces would really be sufficient. They formed but a light veil which would easily be torn if Rennenkampf's main columns moved or his innumerable cavalry squadrons advanced, as we had to fear. But perhaps they would not move. In that case the veil would be enough to cover our weakness. We had to take risks on our flanks and rear if we were to be strong at the decisive point. We hoped we might succeed in deceiving Rennenkampf. Perhaps he would deceive himself. The strong fortress of Königsberg with its garrison and our cavalry might assume the proportions of a mighty force in the imagination of the enemy.

But even supposing Rennenkampf cradled him-

self in illusions to our advantage, would not his High Command urge him forward in forced marches to the southwest—in our rear? Would not Samsonoff's cry for help bring him in hot haste to the battlefield? And even if the sound of human voices echoed in vain, would not the warning thunder of the battle reach the Russian lines north of the lakes, nay, to the enemy's headquarters itself?

Caution with regard to *Rennenkampf* was therefore necessary, though we could not carry it to the extent of leaving strong forces behind, or we should find ourselves weaker on the battlefield than we ought to be.

When we considered the numbers on both sides a comparison with the probable Russian forces showed a great disparity against us, even if we counted in on our side the two *Landwehr* brigades which were then coming from *Schleswig-Holstein* where they had been employed in coast protection (and assuming that they would arrive in time for the battle), and even if *Rennenkampf* did not move and indeed played no part. Moreover, it must be remembered that large bodies of *Landwehr* and *Landsturm* had to fight in the first line. Older classes against the pick of Russia's youth! We had the further disadvantage that most of our troops and, as the situation decreed, all those which had to deliver the *coup de grâce*, had just

been engaged in heavy and expensive fighting. Had they not just been compelled to leave the battlefield of Gumbinnen to the Russians? The troops were not, therefore, marching with the proud feeling of being victors. Yet they pressed forward to the battle with stout hearts and unshaken confidence. We were told that their *morale* was good, and it therefore justified bold decisions. Where it was somewhat shaken such decisions could not fail to restore it. It had been thus before. Could it be otherwise now? I had no misgivings on the score of our numerical inferiority.

He who reckons solely by the visible in war is reckoning falsely. The inherent worth of the soldier is everything. It was on that that I based my confidence. What I thought to myself was this:

The Russian may invade our Fatherland, and contact with the soil of Germany may lift up his heart, but that does not make him a German soldier, and those who lead him are not German officers. The Russian soldier had fought with the greatest obedience on the battlefields of Manchuria, although he had no sympathy with the political ambitions of his rulers in the Pacific. It did not seem unlikely that in a war against the Central Powers the Russian army would have greater enthusiasm for the war aims of the Tsar's Empire. On the other hand, I considered that,

taking it all round, the Russian soldier and officer would not display higher military qualities in the European theater than they had in the Asiatic, and believed that in comparing the two forces I was entitled to credit our side with a plus on the ground of intrinsic value instead of a minus for our numerical inferiority.

Such was our plan and such our line of reasoning before and for the battle. We compressed these ideas and intentions into a short report which we sent from Marienburg to Main Headquarters on August 23d:

Concentration of the army for an enveloping attack in the region of the Twentieth Corps planned for August 26th.

On the evening of the 23d I took a short walk on the western bank of the Nogat. From there the red walls of the proud castle of the Teutonic knights, the greatest brick monument of Baltic Gothic, made a truly wonderful picture in the evening light. Thoughts of a noble chivalry of the past mingled involuntarily with conjecture as to the veiled future. The sight of the refugees flying past me from my home province deepened the sense of responsibility that possessed me. It was a melancholy reminder that war not only affects the fighting man, but proves a thousandfold scourge to humanity by the destruction of the very essentials of existence.

On August 24th I motored with my small staff to the headquarters of the Twentieth Corps, and thus entered the village which was to give its name to the battle so soon to blaze up.

Tannenberg! A word pregnant with painful recollections for German chivalry, a Slav cry of triumph, a name that is fresh in our memories after more than five hundred years of history. Before this day I had never seen the battlefield which proved so fateful to German culture in the East. A simple monument there bore silent witness to the deeds and deaths of heroes. On one of the following days we stood near this monument while Samsonoff's Russian army was going to its doom of sheer annihilation.

On our way from Marienburg to Tannenberg the impression of the miseries into which war had plunged the unhappy inhabitants was intensified. Masses of helpless refugees, carrying their belongings, pressed past me on the road and to a certain extent hindered the movements of our troops which were hastening to meet the foe.

Among the staff at the Corps Headquarters I found the confidence and resolution which were essential for the success of our plan. Moreover, they had a favorable opinion of the *morale* of the troops at this spot, which was at first the crucial point for us.

The day brought us no decisive information

either about Rennenkampf's operations or Samsonoff's movements. Apparently it only confirmed the fact that Rennenkampf was moving forward very slowly. We could not see the reason for this. Of the Narew Army, we knew that its main columns were pressing forward against the Twentieth Corps. Under its pressure this corps refused its left wing. There was nothing doubtful about this measure. Quite the contrary. The enemy, following up, would all the more effectively expose his right flank to our left enveloping column which was marching on Bischofsburg. On the other hand, the hostile movement which was apparently in progress against our western wing and Lautenburg attracted our attention, as it caused us some anxiety. We had the impression that the Russians were thinking of enveloping us in turn at this point and coming in on the flank of our right column as it executed the enveloping movement we projected.

August 25th gave us a rather clearer picture of Rennenkampf's movements. His columns were marching from the Angerapp, and therefore on Königsberg. Had the original Russian plan been abandoned? Or had the Russian leaders been deceived by our movements and suspected that our main force was in and around the fortress? In any case, we must now have not the slightest hesitation in leaving but a thin screen against Ren-

nenkampf's mighty force. On this day Samsonoff, obviously feeling his way, was directing his main columns toward our Twentieth Corps. The corps on the Russian right wing was undoubtedly marching on Bischofsburg, and therefore toward our Seventeenth Corps and First Reserve Corps, which had reached the district north of this village on this day. Apparently further large Russian forces were concentrating at Mlawa.

This day marked the conclusion of the stage of expectation and preparation. We brought our First Corps round to the right wing of the Twentieth Corps. The general attack could begin.

August 26th was the first day of the murderous combat which raged from Lautenburg to north of Bischofsburg. The drama on which the curtain was rising, and whose stage stretched for more than sixty miles, began not with a continuous battle line, but in detached groups; not in one self-contained act, but in a series of scenes.

General von François was leading his brave East Prussians on the right wing. They pushed forward against Usdau with a view to storming the key to this part of the southern battle front next day. General von Scholtz's magnificent corps gradually shook off the chains of defense and addressed themselves to the business of attack. Fierce was the fighting round Bischofsburg that this day wit-

nessed. By the evening magnificent work had been done on our side at this point. In a series of powerful blows the wing corps of Samsonoff's right had been defeated and forced to retreat on Ortelsburg by the troops of Mackensen and Below (Tenth Corps and First Reserve Corps), as well as Landwehr. But we could not yet realize how far-reaching our victory had been. The Staff expected to have to meet a renewed and stout resistance south of this day's battlefield on the following day. Yet was their confidence high.

It was now apparent that danger was threatening from the side of Rennenkampf. It was reported that one of his corps was on the march through Angerburg. Would it not find its way to the rear of our left enveloping force? Moreover, disquieting news came to us from the flank and rear of our western wing. Strong forces of Russian cavalry were in movement away there in the south. We could not find out whether they were being followed up by infantry. The crisis of the battle now approached. One question forced itself upon us. How would the situation develop if these mighty movements and the enemy's superiority in numbers delayed the decision for days? Is it surprising that misgivings filled many a heart, that firm resolution began to yield to vacillation, and that doubts crept in where a clear vision had hitherto prevailed? Would it not be wiser to

strengthen our line facing Rennenkampf again and be content with half measures against Samsonoff? Was it not better to abandon the idea of destroying the Narew Army in order to insure ourselves against destruction?

We overcame the inward crisis, adhered to our original intention, and turned in full strength to effect its realization by attack. So the order was issued for our right wing to advance straight on Neidenburg, and the left enveloping wing "to take up its position at 4 A.M. and intervene with the greatest energy."

August 27th showed that the victory of the First Reserve Corps and Seventeenth Corps at Bischofsburg on the previous day had had far-reaching results. The enemy had not only retired, but was actually fleeing from the battlefield. Moreover, we learned that it was only in the imagination of an airman that Rennenkampf was marching in our rear. The cold truth was that he was slowly pressing on to Königsberg. Did he, or would he, not see that Samsonoff's right flank was already threatened with utter ruin and that the danger to his left wing also was increasing from hour to hour? For it was on this day that François and Scholtz stormed the enemy's lines at and north of Usdau, and defeated our southern opponent. Now, when the enemy's center pushed forward farther toward Allenstein-Hohenstein, it was no longer

victory, but destruction, that lured it on. For us the situation was clear. On the evening of this day we gave orders for the complete encirclement of the enemy's central mass, his Thirteenth and Fifteenth Corps.

The bloody struggle continued to rage on August 28th.

On the 29th a large part of the Russian army saw itself faced with total annihilation at Hohenstein. Ortelsburg was reached from the north, Willenberg, through Neidenburg, from the west. The ring round thousands and thousands of Russians began to close. Even in this desperate situation there was plenty of Russian heroism in the cause of the Tsar, heroism which saved the honor of arms but could no longer save the battle.

Meanwhile *Rennenkampf* was continuing to march quietly on *Königsberg*. *Samsonoff* was lost at the very moment when his comrade was to give proof of other and better military qualities. For we were already in a position to draw troops from the battle front to cover the work of destruction in which we were engaged in the great caldron, Neidenburg-Willenberg-Passenheim, and in which *Samsonoff* sought for death in his despair. Swelling columns of prisoners poured out of this caldron. These were the growing proofs of the greatness of our victory. By a freak of

fortune it was in Osterode, one of the villages which we made our headquarters during the battle, that I received one of the two captured Russian corps commanders, in the same inn at which I had been quartered during a General Staff ride in 1881, when I was a young Staff officer. The other reported to me next day at a school which we had converted into an office.

As the battle proceeded we were able to observe what splendid raw material, generally speaking, the Tsar had at his disposal. I had the impression that it doubtless contained many qualities worth training. As in 1866 and 1870, I noticed on this occasion how quickly the German officer and soldier, with their fine feeling and professional tact, forgot the former foe in the helpless captive. The lust of battle in our men quickly ebbed away and changed to deep sympathy and human feeling. It was only against the Cossacks that our men could not contain their rage. They were considered the authors of all the bestial brutalities under which the people and country of East Prussia had suffered so cruelly. The Cossack apparently suffered from a bad conscience, for whenever he saw himself likely to be taken prisoner he did his best to remove the broad stripe on his trousers which distinguished his branch of the service.

On August 30th the enemy concentrated fresh troops in the south and east, and attempted to

break our encircling ring from without. From Myszaniec—that is, from the direction of Ostrolenka—he brought up new and strong columns to Neidenburg and Ortelsburg against our troops, which had already completely enveloped the Russian center, and were, therefore, presenting their rear to the new foe. There was danger ahead; all the more so because airmen reported that enemy columns twenty-three miles long—therefore very strong—were pressing forward from Mława. Yet we refused to let go of our quarry. Samsonoff's main force had to be surrounded and annihilated; François and Mackensen sent their reserves—weak reserves, it is true—to meet the new enemy. Against their resistance the attempt to mitigate the catastrophe to Samsonoff came to naught. While despair seized on those within the deadly ring, faint-heartedness paralyzed the energies of those who might have brought their release. In this respect, too, the course of events at the battle of Tannenberg confirmed the human and military experiences of yore.

Our ring of fire round the Russian masses, crowded closely together, and swaying this way and that, became closer and narrower with every hour that passed.

Rennenkampf appears to have intended to attack the line of the Deime, west of Königsberg and between Labiau and Tapiau, this day. From

the region of Landsberg and Bartenstein his masses of cavalry were approaching the battlefield of Tannenberg. However, we had already concentrated strong forces, weary, but flushed with victory, for defense in the neighborhood of Allenstein.

August 31st was the day of harvesting for such of our troops as were still engaged, a day of deliberation about the further course of operations for our leaders, and for Rennenkampf the day of the retreat to the Deime-Allenburg-Angenburg line.

As early as the 29th the course of events had enabled me to report the complete collapse of the Russian Narew Army to my All-Highest War Lord. The very same day the thanks of His Majesty, in the name of the Fatherland, had reached me on the battlefield. I transferred these thanks, in my heart as with my lips, to my Chief of Staff and our splendid troops.

On August 31st I was able to send the following report to my Emperor and King:

I beg most humbly to report to Your Majesty that the ring round the larger part of the Russian army was closed yesterday. The 13th, 15th, and 18th Army Corps have been destroyed. We have already taken more than 60,000 prisoners, among them the Corps Commanders of the 13th and 15th Corps. The guns are still in the forests and are now being brought in. The booty is immense, though it cannot yet be assessed in detail. The Corps outside our ring, the 1st and 6th, have also suffered severely and are now retreating in hot haste through Mława and Myszaniec.

The troops and their leaders had accomplished extraordinary feats. The divisions were now in bivouacs and the hymn of thanks of the battle of Leuthen rose from their midst.

In our new headquarters at Allenstein I entered the church, close by the old castle of the Teutonic knights, while divine service was being held. As the clergyman uttered his closing words all those present, young soldiers as well as elderly Landsturm, sank to their knees under the overwhelming impression of their experiences. It was a worthy curtain to their heroic achievements.

IV

The Battle of the Masurian Lakes

The sound of battle on the field of Tannenberg had hardly died down before we had begun to make our preparations for the attack on Rennenkampf's Russian army. On August 31st we received the following telegraphic instructions from Main Headquarters:

Eleventh Corps, Guard Reserve Corps, and 8th Cavalry Division are placed at your disposal. Their transport has begun. The first task of the 8th Army is to clear East Prussia of Rennenkampf's army.

It is desired that with such troops as you can spare you should follow up the enemy you have just beaten in the direction of Warsaw, bearing in mind the Russian movements from Warsaw on Silesia.

When the situation in East Prussia has been restored you are to contemplate employing the 8th Army in the direction of Warsaw.

These orders were exactly what the situation required. They gave us a clear objective and left the ways and means to us. We considered we had reason to believe that what was left of Samsonoff's quondam army was a remnant which had already withdrawn to the shelter of the Narew or was on its way there. We had to count on its being reinforced. But that could not be for a considerable time. For the moment it appeared that all that was required was that this remnant should be watched by weak troops along the line of our southern frontier. Everything else must be assembled for the new battle. Even the arrival of the reinforcements from the West did not, in our opinion, enable us to employ forces in striking south over the line of the Narew.

It was quite clear what the word "Warsaw" meant in the second part of the order. In accordance with the plan of joint operations the armies of Austria-Hungary were to take the offensive from Galicia in the direction of Lubin, exercising their main pressure on the eastern portion of Russian Poland, while German forces in East Prussia were to hold out a hand to their allies across the Narew. It was a largely conceived, fine plan, but in the existing situation it

produced grave embarrassments. It did not take account of the fact that Austria-Hungary had sent a large army to the Serbian frontier, that 800,000 Russians had been sent against East Prussia, least of all that it had been betrayed with all its details to the Russian General Staff in peace time.

The Austro-Hungarian army, after making a hazardous attack on superior Russian forces, was now involved in critical frontal battles, while at the moment we were not in a position to render any direct assistance, though we were holding up large hostile forces. Our allies had to try and hold on until we had beaten Rennenkampf, too. Only then could we come to their help, if not in full strength, at least with our main forces.

As is known, Rennenkampf was then on the Deime-Allenburg-Gerdauen-Angerburg line. We did not know what the enemy had by way of secrets in the region southeast of the Masurian Lakes. The district of Grajevo was suspicious in any case. A good deal of movement was on foot there. Even more suspicious was the whole area behind the Niemen Army. In that quarter there was a continuous movement of trains and marching columns. Apparently that movement was to the west and southwest. Rennenkampf had doubtless received reinforcements. The Russian reserve divisions from the interior were now ready to take the field. Perhaps all that had hitherto been

available were single corps which the Russian High Command believed they no longer needed against the Austrians in Poland. Would these units be sent to Rennenkampf or brought up near him, either to give him direct support or to strike at us from some unsuspected quarter?

So far as we could judge, Rennenkampf had more than twenty divisions, yet he stood still and remained thus, while our army came up from the west and deployed for battle against him. Why did he not use the time of our greatest weakness, when the troops were exhausted and crowded together on the battlefield of Tannenberg, to fall upon us? Why did he give us time to disentangle our units, concentrate afresh, rest and bring up reinforcements? The Russian leader was known to be a fine soldier and general. When Russia was fighting in eastern Asia among all the Russian leaders it was the name of Rennenkampf that rang out over the world. Had his fame then been exaggerated? Or had the general lost his military qualities in the meantime?

Many a time has the soldier's calling exhausted strong characters, and that surprisingly quickly. The fine intellect and resolute will of one year give place to the sterile imaginings and faint heart of the next. That is perhaps the tragedy of military greatness.

We have opened and closed the book of Rennen-

kampf's responsibility for Tannenberg. Let us now go in thought to his headquarters at Insterburg, not to blame him, but to try and understand him.

The disaster to Samsonoff showed General Rennenkampf that the main body of our Eighth Army was not in Königsberg, as he supposed. But he none the less suspected that we still had strong forces in that powerful fortress. It thus seemed venturesome, too venturesome, to mask it and throw himself upon the victorious German army in the neighborhood of Allenstein. It would be safer to hold on in the strong defensive positions between the Kurisches Haff and the Masurian Lakes. Against these lines the Germans could certainly not try their art of envelopment from the north, and only with much difficulty from the south. If they made a frontal attack he would fall upon their troops, crowded together, with strong forces held back in reserve. If they ventured on the improbable and pressed forward through the defiles between the lakes it would be possible to attack the left flank of their enveloping columns from the north while a newly formed group was hurled at their right flank and rear from the direction of Grajevo. If all else failed, well and good—he could withdraw into Russia. Russia was large and the fortified line of the Niemen was at hand. Rennenkampf was no longer

chained to East Prussia by any strategic necessity. The plan of joint operations with Samsonoff had been brought to naught, and as the army of the latter had gone to its doom even as it pressed hopefully forward, the best course was now—to be cautious.

Thus must Rennenkampf have reasoned. And critics have maintained that such *was* his reasoning. It must be admitted that no great decision could have been born of such thoughts. They did not exactly move on bold lines. Yet their translation into action could have produced many a considerable direct crisis for us and had a grave influence on the general situation in the East. The great superiority of the Niemen Army would have been quite enough to cut our Eighth Army to pieces, even after it had been reinforced. A premature retreat of Rennenkampf, however, would have robbed us of the fruits of our new operation and thereupon made it impossible for us to advance on Warsaw and thereby support the Austrians for a long time to come.

We had therefore to be at once cautious and bold. It was this dual requirement which gave their peculiar character to the movements we now initiated. We first established our front on a broad arc from Willenburg to the outskirts of Königsberg. This took us until September 5th, broadly speaking. Then our line moved forward,

Four corps (the Twentieth, Eleventh, First Reserve, and Guard Reserve) and the troops from Königsberg—comparatively a strong force—advanced against the enemy's front on the Angerburg-Deime line. Two corps (the First and Seventeenth) were to push through the lake region. The Third Reserve Division, as the right echelon of our enveloping wing, had to follow south of the Masurian Lakes, while the First and Eighth Cavalry divisions had to be held in readiness behind the main columns, to range at large as soon as the lake defiles were forced. Such were the forces against Rennenkampf's flank. So the scheme differed from the movements which had led to the victory of Tannenberg. This grouping of our columns was imposed upon us by the necessity of securing ourselves against Rennenkampf's strong reserves. In this way fourteen infantry divisions were told off to attack the front, in spite of the fact that its breadth was more than ninety-five miles.

On the 6th and 7th we were approaching the Russian lines and began to see rather more clearly. There were strong Russian columns near Insterburg and Wehlau, perhaps even stronger ones north of Nordenburg. They made no movement at first, and in no way interfered with us as we deployed for battle before their lines.

The two corps on our right (First and Seventeenth) began to force their way through the chain

of lakes on September 7th, while at Bialla the Third Reserve Division shattered half of the Russian Twentieth Corps in a brilliant action. We were entering upon the crisis of our new operations. The next few days would show whether Rennenkampf intended to attempt a counter-attack and whether his resolution to do so was as great as his resources. To add to his already formidable superiority three more reserve divisions appeared to have reached the battlefield. Was the Russian commander still waiting for more? Russia had more than three million fighting men on her western front, while the Austro-Hungarian armies and ourselves had scarcely a third of that number.

The battle blazed up along the whole front on September 8th. Our frontal attack made no progress, but things went better on our right wing. In that quarter two corps had broken through the enemy's lake defenses and were turning north and northeast. Our objective was now the enemy's line of communications. Our cavalry appeared to have an open road in that direction.

On the 9th the battle raged further. On the front from Angerburg to the Kurisches Haff it had no appreciable result, but our bold thrust east of the lakes made headway, although the two cavalry divisions were not able to break down the unexpected resistance they encountered with the speed we could have wished. The Third Reserve

Division defeated an enemy several times its own strength at Lyck, and thus freed us once and for all from danger in the south.

How were things going in the north? Our air-men believed they could now clearly identify two enemy corps at and west of Insterburg, as well as see another marching on Tilsit. What would be the fate of our corps, strung out fighting on a long front, if a Russian avalanche of more than a hundred battalions, led by resolute wills, descended upon them? Yet it is easy to understand what our wishes and words were on the evening of this September 9th: "Rennenkampf, come what may, do not abandon this front of yours we cannot force. Win your laurels with the attack of your center." We had now full confidence that by resolutely pressing home our attack on the wing we could snatch back such laurels from the Russian leader. Unfortunately, the Russian commander knew what we were thinking. He had not sufficient determination to meet our plans with force, and lowered his arms.

In the night of September 9th-10th our patrols entered the enemy's trenches near Gerdauen, and found them empty. "The enemy is retreating." The report seemed to us incredible. The First Reserve Corps immediately pressed forward against Insterburg from Gerdauen. We urged caution. It was only about midday of the 10th that we were

compelled to accept the improbable and unpalatable fact. The enemy had actually begun a general retreat, even though he offered a stout resistance here and there, and indeed, threw heavy columns against us in disconnected attacks. It was now our business to draw the corps and cavalry divisions on our right wing sharply northeast, and set them at the enemy's communications with Insterburg and Kovno.

On we pressed! If ever impatience was comprehensible it was comprehensible now. Rennen-kampf was retiring steadily. He, too, seemed to be impatient. Yet our impatience was in striving for victory, while his brought him confusion and dissolution.

Some of the corps of the Niemen Army were marching back into Russia in three columns, very close together. The movement was effected but slowly, as it had to be covered by strong rear-guards, which kept back the Germans who were following up hard. September 11th, in particular, was a day of bloody fighting from Goldap right to the Pregel.

In the evening of that day it was quite clear to us that only a few days more remained for us to carry out the pursuit. The development of the general situation in the Eastern theater was having its effect. We suspected, rather than gathered, from the definite reports which reached us, that the operations of our allies in Poland and Galicia

had failed! In any case, it was no good thinking of our thrust across the Niemen in Rennenkampf's rear. But if our operation at the last moment was not to prove a failure within the framework of the whole allied plan, the enemy's army must at least reach the protection of the Niemen sector so weakened and shaken that the bulk of our troops could be released for that co-operation with the Austro-Hungarian army, which had become urgently necessary.

On September 18th the Third Reserve Division reached Suvalki on Russian soil. Rennenkampf's southern wing escaped envelopment by our First Corps south of Stallupönen by the skin of its teeth. Brilliant were the feats of several of our units engaged in the pursuit. They marched and fought and marched again, until the men were dropping down from fatigue. On the other hand, it was on this day that we were able to withdraw the Guard Reserve Corps from the battle front and hold it ready for further operations.

It was on this day that our headquarters reached Insterburg, which had been in German occupation once more since the 11th. Moving on the broad, East Prussian roads, past our victorious columns marching eastward, and other columns of Russian prisoners streaming west, we thus reached Rennenkampf's former headquarters not only in imagination, but in actual fact.

This first evacuation had left behind remarkable traces of Russian semicivilization. The heavy odors of scent, leather, and cigarettes were not able to cover the odor of other things. Exactly a year later, I was returning through Insterburg after a day's hunting, on a certain Sunday. At the market place my car was turned back, as there was about to be a service of thanks to commemorate the release of the town from the Russian grip.

I had to make a detour. I had not been recognized. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

On September 10th our troops reached Eydtkuhen, firing in the back of the Russian horde fleeing before them. Our artillery blew great gaps in the tightly packed masses, but the herding instinct filled them up again. Unfortunately, we did not reach the great main road from Wirballen to Wylkowyszki this day. The enemy knew that this would spell annihilation to many of his columns which nothing now could stop. He therefore scraped together everything he had in the way of battle-worthy units, and threw them against our exhausted troops south of the road. We had only one day more for the pursuit. By the next Rennenkampf's forces would have taken refuge in that region of forest and marsh which lies west of the Olita-Kovno-Wileny sector of the Niemen. We should not be able to follow them there.

On September 15th the fighting was over. After

a pursuit of more than sixty miles, a distance we had covered within four days, the battle of the Masurian Lakes had ended on Russian soil. When the fighting concluded, the bulk of our units were fit for fresh employment elsewhere.

I have no room here to speak of the brilliant exploit performed during these days by Von der Goltz's Landwehr Division and other Landwehr formations in their battles with enemy forces many times their own strength, in the region of our southern frontier, and while covering our right flank almost as far as the Vistula. By the time these actions were concluded, my command of the Eighth Army had come to an end. At that point our troops had pressed forward to Ciechanov, Prasnysz, and Augustovo.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAMPAIGN IN POLAND

I

I Leave the Eighth Army

AT the beginning of September we had heard from the headquarters of the Austro-Hungarian army that their armies in the neighborhood of Lemberg were in serious peril and that a halt had been called to the further advance of the Austro-Hungarian First and Fourth Armies.

Since that time we had followed events in that quarter with great anxiety, and received further and worse reports. The following telegrams throw the best light on the sequence of events:

From us to Main Headquarters on September 10, 1914:

It seems to me questionable whether Rennenkampf can be decisively beaten, as the Russians have begun to retreat early this morning. As regards plans for the future there is a question of concentrating an army in Silesia. Could we rely on further reinforcement from the west? We can dispense with two corps from this front.

This was sent on September 10th, the very day on which Rennenkampf had begun that retirement to the east which had so much surprised us.

Telegram from Main Headquarters to us on September 13th:

Release two corps as soon as possible and prepare them for transport to Cracow. . . .

Cracow? That sounded odd! We thought so, and said even more on the subject. In our perplexity we wired as follows to Main Headquarters on September 13th:

Pursuit ended this morning. Victory appears complete. Offensive against the Narew in a decisive direction is possible in about ten days. On the other hand, Austria, anxious about Rumania, asks direct support by the concentration of the army at Cracow and in Upper Silesia. For that, four army corps and one cavalry division are available. Railway transport alone would take about twenty days. Further long marches to the Austrian left wing. Help would come too late there. Immediate decision required. In any case the army must retain its independence there.

This was on the day on which Rennenkampf was beginning to vanish into the marshes of the Niemen with the loss of not merely a few feathers, but a whole wing, and grievously stricken as well.

On September 14th Main Headquarters replied to us as follows:

In the present situation of the Austrians an operation over the Narew is no longer considered hopeful. Direct support of the Austrians is required on political grounds.

It is a question of operations from Silesia. . . .

The independence of the army will be retained even in case of joint operations with the Austrians.

So that was it! There is a certain book, *Vom Kriege*, which never grows old. Its author is Clausewitz. He knew war and he knew men. We had to listen to him, and whenever we followed him it was to victory. To do otherwise meant disaster. He gave a warning about the encroachment of politics on the conduct of military operations. In saying this, I am far from passing a judgment upon the orders we now received. I may have criticized in thought and word in 1914, but to-day I have completed my education in the rough school of reality, the conduct of operations in a coalition war. Experience tempers criticism, indeed frequently reveals how unfounded it has been. During the war we have times without number attempted to think: "He is a lucky man who has an easier soldier's conscience than ours, and who has won the battle between his military convictions and the demands of politics as easily as we have." The political tune is a ghastly tune! I myself during the war seldom heard in that tune those harmonies which would have struck an echo in a soldier's heart. Let us hope that if ever our Fatherland's dire necessity involves a summons to arms again, others will be more fortunate in this respect than we were!

On September 15th I had to part from General Ludendorff. He had been appointed Chief of Staff of the newly formed Ninth Army. On September 17th, however, His Majesty gave orders that I was to take over the command of this army while retaining my control of the Eighth Army, which had been left behind to protect East Prussia, but was now reduced by the loss of the Eleventh, Seventeenth and Twentieth Corps, as well as the First Cavalry Division, which had been given up for the Ninth Army. The separation from my Chief of Staff was therefore truly a short one. I only mention it because legend has pounced upon it and exaggerated.

In the early morning hours of September 18th I left the headquarters of the First Army at Insterburg for a two days' journey by car across Poland to the Silesian capital, Breslau. The first stage of my journey carried me over the battlefields of the last few weeks, conjuring up grateful memories of our troops. At the outset we passed through deserted, burned-out villages, and then gradually entered a region which had not been touched by war, where we passed peasants returning eastward to find their deserted homesteads. Genuine peasantry, the best foundation of our national strength. I accompanied them in thought to the perhaps smoke-blackened remnants of their homes, a sight from which they had been preserved

for more than a hundred years, thanks to our splendid army. Then we made for the Vistula through homely villages and small towns where there seemed scarcely any traces of the splendor of historic Western culture. This was the ground Germany had colonized. Truly she had not given of her worst for it, though herself dismembered. Its greatest treasure is the capacity for work and high character of its inhabitants. A simple, loyal, reflective people. To me it seemed that here Kant's teaching of the categorical imperative had not only been preached, but was understood in the deepest sense, and had been translated into the world of action.

Almost all the German tribes have contributed to the work of culture in this region—a weary task that took centuries—and thus acquired those strong wills which have rendered priceless services to our Fatherland in its hour of need.

These and other serious thoughts of the same nature passed through my mind as we journeyed, and they never left me throughout the whole course of the desperate struggle. Germans, let me compress them into a warning:

Gird yourselves, all of you, not only with the golden band of your moral duty to mankind, but with the steel band of an equal duty to your Fatherland. Strengthen that band of steel until it becomes an iron wall in the shelter of which you

will wish to live, and alone can live in the center of a European world in flames! Believe me, this conflagration will rage for a long time yet. No human voices will charm it away, no human compacts can keep it within bounds. Woe to us if the flames find even one broken fragment in that wall. It will become the battering ram of the European hordes against the last German fortress still standing. Our history has unfortunately told us so only too often!

Once again I said farewell to the homeland with no light heart. But another farewell was even harder at this moment, the farewell to the independence we had previously enjoyed. However consoling the concluding sentence of the last telegram from Main Headquarters may have sounded, I suspected the fate which was in store for us. I knew it, not because of the previous campaign, for then we had enjoyed military independence—a treasure of gold—in richest measure. I knew it from the history of earlier coalition wars.

II

The Advance

We had come to the conclusion that our best course was to concentrate our army in the region of Kreuznach in Central Silesia. From there we thought we should have more room to maneuver

against the northern flank of the Russian army group in Poland, the exact position of which had not been established at the moment—"Impossible!"

If our army were allowed, we should like to advance with our right wing through Kielce (Central Poland)—"Impossible!"

We should have liked strong Austro-Hungarian forces to have accompanied us north of the Vistula as far as the confluence of the San—"Impossible!"

By the time all this had been pronounced impossible it looked as if the whole operation might be, or become, impossible.

We therefore concentrated our troops (Eleventh, Seventeenth, Twentieth, Guard Reserve Corps, Woyrsch's Landwehr Corps, the Thirty-fifth Reserve Division, and the Eighth Cavalry Division) north of Cracow in that closest touch with the left wing of the Austro-Hungarian army which Main Headquarters had ordered. Our own headquarters were fixed for a time at Beuthen, in Upper Silesia. The Austro-Hungarian Command were sending from Cracow a weak army of only four infantry divisions and one cavalry division north of the Vistula. They did not think they could spare anything more from the south side of the river, for they themselves were bent on a decisive attack in that quarter. This plan of our allies was certainly bold and did credit to its authors. The only question was whether there was any prospect that,

in spite of all the reinforcement it had received, the greatly weakened army could carry it into execution. My doubts were tempered by the hope that as soon as the Russians had noticed the presence of German troops in Poland they would throw their full weight against us and thereby facilitate the victory of our allies.

The picture of the situation which we drew for ourselves when the movements began was somewhat vague. All we knew for certain was that the Russians had only been following the retiring Austro-Hungarian armies over the San very slowly of late. Further, there were signs that north of the Vistula there were six or seven Russian cavalry divisions and an unknown number of brigades of frontier guards. A Russian army seemed to be in process of formation at Ivangorod. Apparently some of the troops of this army had been drawn from the armies which had previously faced us in East Prussia, while others had come fresh from Asiatic Russia. Further, we had received reports that a great intrenched position west of Warsaw and fronting west was in course of construction. We were therefore marching into a situation which was quite obscure, and must be prepared for surprises.

We entered Russian Poland, and immediately realized the full meaning of what a French general, in his description of the Napoleonic campaign of 1806, in which he had taken part, called a special

feature of military operations in this region—mud! And it really *was* mud in every form, not only mud in the natural sense, but mud in the so-called human habitations and even on the inhabitants themselves. As soon as we crossed the frontier it was as if we had entered another world. The question that rose involuntarily to one's lips was, how was it possible that in the very heart of Europe the frontier posts between Posen and Polen should form so sharp a line of demarcation between different degrees of culture of the same race? In what a state of physical, moral, and material squalor had Russian administration left this part of the country! To what a slight degree had the civilizing work of the over-refined upper social strata of Poland permeated the downtrodden lower strata! My very first impressions made me doubt whether the open political indifference of the masses could be given a higher impetus, through the influence of the clergy, for example, an impetus which might have led them voluntarily to range themselves on our side in this war.

Our movements were rendered extraordinarily difficult by the state of the roads. The enemy obtained an inkling of what we were doing and took countermeasures. He withdrew half a dozen corps from his front against the Austrians with the obvious intention of throwing them across the Vistula south of Ivangorod for a frontal attack upon us.

On October 6th we crossed the line Opatow-Radom and reached the Vistula. We here drove back such portions of the enemy's forces as were west of the river. At this point it was apparent that our northern flank was threatened from the Warsaw-Ivangorod line. In these circumstances it was impossible, for the time being, to continue our operation across the Vistula, south of Ivangorod in an easterly direction. We must first deal with the enemy in the north. Everything else depended on the issue of the considerable actions which were to be expected in that quarter. A curious strategic situation was thus developing. While hostile corps from Galicia were making for Warsaw on the far side of the Vistula, our own corps were moving in the same northerly direction, but on this side of the river. To hold up our movement to the left the enemy threw large forces across the Vistula at and below Ivangorod. In a series of severe actions these were thrown back on their crossing places, but we were not in a position to clear the western bank entirely of the enemy. Two days' march south of Warsaw our left wing came into touch with a superior enemy force and threw it back against the fortress. About one day's march from the *enceinte* our attack came to a standstill.

On the battlefield south of Warsaw our most important capture was a Russian army order which

fell into our hands and gave us a clear picture of the enemy's strength and intentions. From the confluence of the San to Warsaw it appeared that we had four Russian armies to cope with—that is about sixty divisions, against eighteen of ours. From Warsaw alone fourteen enemy divisions were being employed against five on our side. That meant two hundred and twenty-four Russian battalions to sixty German. The enemy's superiority was increased by the fact that as a result of the previous fighting in East Prussia and France, as well as the long and exhausting marches of more than two hundred miles over indescribable roads, our troops had been reduced to scarcely half establishment, and in some cases even to a quarter of their original strength. And these weakened units of ours were to meet fresh arrivals at full strength—the Siberian Corps, the élite of the Tsar's Empire!

The enemy's intention was to hold fast along the Vistula while a decisive attack from Warsaw was to spell our ruin. It was unquestionably a great plan of the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaivitch, indeed the greatest I had known, and in my view it remained his greatest until he was transferred to the Caucasus.

In the autumn of 1897, after the Kaiser maneuvers, I had met the Grand Duke on the station of Homburg, and entered into a conversation with him which turned principally on the employment of

artillery. But it was here in Poland that I had seen the Russian Commander-in-Chief for the first time actually at work, for he seems to have put in only an occasional appearance in East Prussia, and then merely as a spectator. If his plans succeeded, not only our Ninth Army would be in danger, but our whole Eastern front, Silesia, and indeed the whole country, would be faced with a catastrophe. Yet we must not yield to such black thoughts, but find ways and means to avert the menace. We accordingly decided, while maintaining our hold of the Vistula upstream from Ivango-rod, to bring up from that quarter to our left wing all the troops we could possibly release, and hurl them at the enemy south of Warsaw, in the hope of defeating him before his fresh masses could put in an appearance.

Necessity lends wings! We therefore asked Austria-Hungary to send everything she could spare in the way of troops in hot haste left of the Vistula against Warsaw. The Austrian High Command showed that they fully realized the situation, but at the same time raised doubts which were hardly in keeping with the emergency. Austria-Hungary, to whose help we had rushed, was quite prepared to support us, but only by the tedious method—which involved a loss of time—of taking over from the troops we had left on the line of the Vistula. This would certainly enable us to avoid

the mingling of Austro-Hungarian and German units, but it put the whole operation in danger of miscarriage. Counterproposals from our side led to no result, so we yielded to the wishes of Austria-Hungary in the matter.

III

The Retreat

What we had feared actually materialized. Fresh masses of troops poured forth from Warsaw and crossed the Vistula below it. Our far-flung battle line was firmly held in front while superior enemy forces, reaching out farther and farther west, threatened to roll up our left flank. The situation could and should not be allowed to remain thus. Our whole joint plan of operations was in danger of not only floundering in the marshes—but of failing altogether. Indeed, it could be said that it had failed already, since the victory we hoped for in Galicia, south of the upper Vistula, had not materialized, although the enemy had brought great masses from there to meet the Ninth Army and had therefore weakened himself against our allies. In any case we had to take the unwelcome decision, a decision which was received very unwillingly by the troops at first, to break away clear of the threatened envelopment and find a way out of our perils by other paths. In the

night of October 18th-19th the battlefield of Warsaw was abandoned to the enemy. With a view to continuing the operation even now, we brought the troops fighting under Mackensen before Warsaw back to the Rawa-Lowicz line—*i.e.*, about forty miles west of the fortress. We hoped that the enemy would hurl himself against this position, which faced east. With the troops which had been relieved by the Austrians before Ivangorod in the south we would then attempt a decisive blow at the main body of the Russian army group in the bend of the Vistula. A condition precedent to the execution of this plan was that Mackensen's troops should withstand the onslaught of the Russian hordes and that the Austrian defense of the line of the Vistula should be so strong that the thrust we intended would be safe from any Russian flank movement from the east. In view of the strength of the Vistula line this appeared an easy task for our allies. The Austrian High Command, however, made it much more difficult by their intention, good enough in itself, to attempt a great blow themselves. They decided to leave the crossings of the Vistula at and north of Ivangorod open to the enemy, with a view to falling upon the enemy columns as they were in the act of crossing. It was a bold scheme which had often been discussed and executed in war games and maneuvers in peace, and even in war

carried out in brilliant fashion by Field-Marshal Blücher and his Gneisenau at the Katzbach. But it is always a hazardous operation, particularly when the general is not absolutely sure of his troops. We therefore advised against it. But in vain! Superior Russian forces pressed over the Vistula at Ivangorod. The Austrian counter-attack gained no success and was soon paralyzed, and finally converted into a retreat.

Of what use was it now to us that the first Russian onslaughts on Mackensen's new front failed? The withdrawal of our allies had uncovered the right flank of our proposed attack. We had to abandon this operation. I considered that our best course was to continue our retreat and thus break away with a view to being able to employ our army for another blow elsewhere later on. It was in our headquarters at Radom that the idea took shape within me, at first only in outline, but yet clear enough to serve as a basis for further measures. My Chief of Staff will confirm this. His titanic energy would provide everything for their execution. Of that I was certain.

I must admit that serious doubts mingled with my resolution. What would the homeland say when our retreat approached its frontiers? Was it remarkable that terror reigned in Silesia? Its inhabitants would think of how the Russians had laid waste East Prussia, of robbing and looting,

the deportation of noncombatants, and other horrors. Fertile Silesia, with its highly developed coal mines and great industrial areas, both as vital to our military operations as daily bread itself! It is not an easy thing in war to stand with your hand on the map and say, "I am going to evacuate this region!" You must be an economist as well as a soldier. Ordinary human feelings also assert themselves. It is often these last which are the hardest to overcome.

Our retreat in the general direction of Czenstochau began on October 27th. The thorough destruction of all roads and railways was to hold back the solid Russian masses until we had got quite clear and found time to initiate fresh operations. The army pressed behind the Widawka and Warta with its left wing in the neighborhood of Sieradz. Headquarters went to Czenstochau. At first the Russians were hot on our heels, but then the distance between us began to increase. This rapid change in the most anxious situation had to be the solution for the time being.

At this point I cannot help admitting how much the punctual knowledge of the dangers that threatened us was facilitated by the incomprehensible lack of caution, I might almost say naïveté, with which the Russians used their wireless. By tapping the enemy wireless we were often enabled not only to learn what the situation was, but also the inten-

tions of the enemy. In spite of this exceptionally favorable circumstance, the situation that was developing made quite heavy enough demands on the nerves of the command on account of the great numerical superiority of the enemy. However, I knew that we had our subordinate commanders firmly in hand and had unshakable confidence that the men in the ranks would do everything that was humanly possible. It was this co-operation of all concerned that enabled us to overcome the most dangerous crisis. Yet did it not look as if our final ruin had only been postponed for a time? The enemy certainly thought so and rejoiced. Apparently he considered that we were completely beaten. This seems to have been his view of our plight, for on November 1st his wireless ran: "Having followed the enemy up for more than one hundred and twenty versts, it is time to hand over the pursuit to the cavalry. The infantry are tired and supply is difficult." We could therefore take breath and embark on fresh operations.

On this November 1st His Majesty the Emperor appointed me Commander-in-Chief of all the German forces in the East, and at the same time extended my sphere of command over the German eastern frontier provinces. General Ludendorff remained my Chief of Staff. The command of the Ninth Army was intrusted to General von Mackensen. We were thus relieved of direct command of

the army, but our influence on the whole organization was all the more far-reaching.

We selected Posen as our headquarters. Yet even before we took up residence there we had, at Czenstochau on November 3d, come to the final decision as to our new operations, or rather I should say that our further intentions had received their final form.

IV

Our Counterattack

The consideration that formed the basis of our new plan was this: In the existing situation, if we tried to deal purely frontally with the attack of the Russian Fourth Army, a battle against overwhelming Russian superiority would take the same course as that before Warsaw. It was not thus that Silesia would be saved from a hostile invasion. The problem of saving Silesia could only be solved by an offensive. Such an offensive against the front of a far superior enemy would simply be shattered to pieces. We had to find the way to his exposed, or merely slightly protected, flank. The raising of my left hand explained what I meant at the first conference. If we felt for the enemy's northern wing in the region of Lodz we must transfer to Thorn the forces to be employed in the attack. We accordingly planned our new concentration between that fortress and Gnesen.

In so doing we were putting a great distance between ourselves and the Austro-Hungarian left wing. Only comparatively weak German forces, including Woyrsch's exhausted Landwehr Corps, were to be left behind in the neighborhood of Czenstochau. It was a condition precedent to our flanking movement by the left that the Austro-Hungarian High Command should relieve those of our forces moving north in the region of Czenstochau by four infantry divisions from the Carpathian front, which was not threatened at this time.

For our new concentration in the region of Thorn and Gnesen all the allied forces in the East were distributed among three great groups. The first was formed by the Austro-Hungarian army on both sides of the upper Vistula, the two others of our Eighth and Ninth Armies. We were not able to fill the gaps between the three groups with really good fighting troops. We had to put what were practically newly formed units into the sixty-mile gap between the Austrians and our Ninth Army. The offensive capacity of these troops was pretty low to start with, and yet we had to spread them out so much along the front of very superior Russian forces that to all intents and purposes they formed but a thin screen. From the point of view of numbers, the Russians had only to walk into Silesia to sweep away their resistance with ease and certainty. Between the Ninth Army at

Thorn and the Eighth on the eastern frontier of East Prussia we had practically nothing but frontier guards reinforced by the garrisons of Thorn and Graudenz. Facing these troops was a strong Russian group of about four army corps north of Warsaw on the northern banks of the Vistula and the Narew. If this Russian group had been sent forward through Mlawa the situation which had developed at the end of August before the battle of Tannenberg would have been repeated. The line of retreat of the Eighth Army, therefore, appeared to be once more seriously threatened. From the critical situation in Silesia and East Prussia we were to be released by the offensive of the Ninth Army in the direction of Lodz against the flank of the Russian main mass, which was only weakly protected. It is obvious that if the attack of this army did not get home quickly the enemy masses would concentrate upon it from all sides. The danger of this was all the greater because we were not numerically strong enough, nor were our troops good enough in quality, to pin down the Russian forces in the bend of the Vistula, as well as the enemy corps north of the middle Vistula, by strong holding attacks, or indeed mislead them for any considerable length of time. In spite of all this we intended to make our troops attack everywhere, but it would have been a dangerous error to expect too much from this.

Everything in the way of good storm troops had to be brought up to reinforce the Ninth Army. It was to deliver the decisive blow. However great was the threat of the Eighth Army, it had to give up two corps to the Ninth. Under these circumstances it was no longer possible to continue the defense of the recently freed province on the Russian side of the frontier; our lines had to be withdrawn to the lake region and the Angerapp. This was not an easy decision. As the result of the measures of which I have spoken the total strength of the Ninth Army was brought up to about five and a half corps and five cavalry divisions. Two of the latter had come from the Western front. In spite of our earnest representations Main Headquarters could not see their way to release further units from that side. At this moment they were still hoping for a favorable issue to the battle of Ypres. The full extent and meaning of the difficulties of a war on two fronts were revealing themselves once more.

The lack of numbers on our side had again to be made good by speed and energy. I felt quite sure that in this respect the command and the troops would do everything that was humanly possible. By November 10th the Ninth Army was ready. On the 11th it was off, with its left wing along the Vistula and its right north of the Warta. It was high time, for news had reached us that the enemy

also intended to take the offensive. An enemy wireless betrayed to us that the armies of the northwest front, in other words all the Russian armies from the Baltic to and including Poland, would start for a deep invasion of Germany on November 14th. We took the initiative out of the hands of the Russian Commander-in-Chief, and when he heard of our operation on the 13th he did not dare to venture on his great blow against Silesia, but threw in all the troops he could lay hands on to meet our attack. For the time being Silesia was thus saved and the immediate purpose of our scheme was achieved. Would we be able to go one better and secure a great decision? The enemy's superiority was enormous at all points. Yet I hoped for great things!

It would exceed the limits of this book if I were now to give a summary, however general, of the military events which are compressed into the designation "battle of Lodz." In its rapid changes from attack to defense, enveloping to being enveloped, breaking through to being broken through, this struggle reveals a most confusing picture on both sides. A picture which in its mounting ferocity exceeded all the battles that had previously been fought on the Eastern front!

In conjunction with the Austro-Hungarians we succeeded in stemming the floods of half Asia.

The battles of this Polish campaign, however,

did not end with Lodz, but were continuously fed by both sides. More troops came to us from the West, but they were anything but fresh. Most of them were willing enough, but they were half exhausted. Some of them had come from an equally hard, perhaps harder struggle—the battle of Ypres—than we had just fought. In spite of that, we tried with them to force back the Russian flood we had successfully dammed. And indeed for a long time it looked as if we should succeed. But in the long run, as in the battle of Lodz, it was seen that once more our forces were not sufficient for this contest with the most overwhelming superiority which faced us in every battle. We should have been able to do more if our reinforcements had not come up in dribblets. We should have been able to put them in simultaneously. But the colossal block we tried to roll back to the east only moved a short stretch, then lay still, and nothing would shift it. Our energies flagged. But it was not only in battle that they were dissipated, but also in—the marshes!

The approach of winter laid its paralyzing hand on the activity of friend and foe alike. The line which had already become rigid in battle was now covered with snow and ice. The question was, who would be the first to shake this line from its torpor in the coming months?

CHAPTER VII

1915

I

The Question of a Decision

THE achievements of Germany and the German army in the year 1914 will only be appreciated in all their heroic greatness when truth and justice have free play once more, when our enemies' attempt to mislead world opinion by propaganda is unmasked, and when Germany's passion for self-criticism to the point of self-mutilation has made way for a quiet, judicial examination. I have no doubt that all this will come in due course.

Yet in spite of all our achievements the mighty work that had been forced upon us was not crowned with success. Up to this point our battles had saved us for the time being, but they had not brought us final victory. The first step to such a consummation was a decision on at least one of our fronts. We had to get out of the military, political, and economic ring that had been forged about us, a ring which threatened to squeeze the

breath out of our bodies even in a moral sense. The reasons why victory had hitherto escaped us were debatable, and they will remain debatable. The fact remains that our High Command believed themselves compelled prematurely to draw away to the East strong forces from the West, where they were trying to secure a rapid decision. Whether an exaggerated idea of the extent of the successes hitherto obtained in the West had a great effect on that decision must remain uncertain. Whatever the cause, the result was half-measures. One objective was abandoned; the other was never reached.

In many a conversation with officers who had some knowledge of the course of events in the Western theater in August and September, 1914, I have tried to get an unbiased opinion about the transactions which proved so fateful for us in the so-called "battle of the Marne." I do not believe that one single cause can make our great plan of campaign, unquestionably the right one, responsible. A whole series of unfavorable influences was our undoing. To these I must add (1) the watering down of our fundamental scheme of deploying with a strong right wing; (2) the fact that through mistaken independent action on the part of subordinate commanders, our left wing, which had been made too strong, allowed itself to be firmly held; (3) ignorance of the danger to be apprehended

from the strongly fortified, great railway nexus of Paris; (4) insufficient control of the movements of the armies by the High Command; (5) perhaps also the fact that at the critical moment of the battle certain subordinate commands were not in close enough touch with a situation not in itself unfavorable. The impartial examination of history and the critics will find here a worthy field for their activities.

May I, however, here express a decided opinion that the failure of our first operation in the West brought us into a position of great peril, but in no way made the further prosecution of the war hopeless for us. If I had not been firmly convinced of this I should have deemed it my duty, even in the autumn of 1914, to make appropriate representations to higher authority, even to my All-Highest War Lord himself. Our army had displayed qualities so brilliant and so superior to those of all our enemies that in my opinion, if we had concentrated all our resources we could have secured a decision, at any rate at the outset, in one of our theaters of war, in spite of the growing numerical superiority of the enemy.

West or East? That was the great question, and on the answer to it our fate depended. Of course Main Headquarters could not allow me a deciding voice in the solution of this problem. The responsibility for that lay alone and exclusively on their

shoulders. I consider, nevertheless, that I have the right and duty to bring forward my views on this subject, and express them frankly and openly.

From the general point of view, the so-called decision in the West was traditional. I might perhaps say national. In the West was the enemy whose chauvinistic agitation against us had not left us in peace even in times of peace. In the West, too, was now that other enemy who every German was convinced was the motive force working for the destruction of Germany. Compared with that, we often found Russia's greed for Constantinople comprehensible. Her longings for East and West Prussia were not taken seriously.

Thus, as regards the war in the West, the German High Command could be certain that the governing minds of the Fatherland, and indeed the feelings of the majority of the nation, were on their side. Here was a moral factor not to be despised. I should not like to say whether this played any part in the calculations of our military leaders, but I know for certain that the idea of a decision in the West had been brought before us hundreds and thousands of times, both verbally and in writing. Indeed, when the conduct of operations was intrusted to me subsequently, I found those who suggested the idea of formally sparing Russia. It was commonly believed that it would be relatively

easy for us to come to an understanding with Russia by the methods of peace.

Even to me the decisive battle in the West, a battle which would have meant final victory, was the *ultima ratio*, but an *ultima ratio* which could only be reached over the body of a Russia stricken to the ground. Should we ever be able to strike Russia to the ground? Fate answered this question in the affirmative, but only two years later, when, as was to be made clear, it was too late. For by that time our situation had fundamentally changed. The numbers and resources of our other foes had in the meantime reached giant proportions, and in the circle of their armies Russia's place had been taken by America, with her youthful energies and mighty economic powers!

I believed that in the winter of 1914-15 we could answer the question, whether we could overthrow Russia, in the affirmative. I believe it just as much to-day. Of course our goal was not to be reached in a single great battle, a colossal Sedan, but only through a series of such and similar battles. The preliminary conditions for this were present, as had already been revealed, in the generalship of the Russian army commanders, though not of their commander-in-chief. Tannenberg had showed it clearly. Lodz would have shown it, perhaps on an even greater scale, if we had not had to take the battles in Poland against too great a

numerical superiority upon our shoulders and, so to speak, stop halfway to victory for lack of numbers.

I have never underestimated the Russians. In my opinion the idea that Russia was nothing but despotism and slavery, unwieldiness, stupidity, and selfishness, was quite false. Strong and noble moral qualities were at work there, if only in comparatively restricted circles. Love of country, self-reliance, perseverance, and broad views were not entirely unknown in the Russian army. How otherwise could the huge masses have ever been put in motion, and the nation and troops have been willing to accept such hecatombs of human life? The Russian of 1914 and 1915 was no longer the Russian of Zorndorf, who let himself be slaughtered like sheep. But what the Russian masses lacked were those great human and spiritual qualities which among us are the common property of the nation and the army.

The previous battles with the armies of the Tsar had given our officers and men a feeling of unquestioned superiority over the enemy. This conviction, which was shared by the oldest Landsturm man with the youngest recruit, explains the fact that here in the East we could use formations the fighting value of which would have prevented their employment on the Western Front except in emergencies. It was an enormous advantage to us

that from the point of view of numbers we were so inferior to our combined enemies! Of course there were limits to the use of such troops, in view of the demands which had to be made on the endurance and strategic mobility of the units in the Eastern theater. The main blow had to be delivered, time and time again, by really effective divisions. If the numbers required to carry through some decisive operation could not be obtained by new formations, it was my opinion that they should be obtained from the Western Front, even if it meant evacuating part of the occupied territory.

These views are not the result of a process of reasoning after the event or *post hoc* criticism. It has been urged against them that the Russians were in a position, in case of need, to withdraw so far into the so-called "vast spaces" of their Empire that our strategic impetus must be paralyzed the farther we followed them. I think that these views were inspired far too much by memories of 1812, and that they did not take sufficient account of the development and transformation of the political and economic conditions obtaining at the heart of the Tsar's realms. I am thinking more particularly of the railways. Napoleon's campaign drove but a comparatively small wedge into vast Russia, thinly populated, economically primitive, and, from the point of view of domestic politics, still asleep. What a different thing a great modern offensive

would have been! What totally different circumstances would it find now, even in Russia!

At bottom it was these views which were the subject of controversy between Main Headquarters, as then constituted, and my army headquarters. Public discussion has introduced a good deal of legend into that controversy. There could be no question of dramatic action, however deeply the affair affected me personally. I leave a final expert decision to the critics of the future, and am convinced that even these will not come to any unanimous conclusion. In any case, I shall never live to see it.

II

Battles and Operations in the East

I can only deal in broad outlines with the events of the year 1915 in the East.

On our part of the Eastern Front fighting was resumed with the greatest violence. It had never completely died down. With us, however, it did not rage with quite the same fury as in the Carpathians, where the Austro-Hungarian armies in a desperate struggle had to protect the fields of Hungary from the Russian floods. The critical situation had taken even my Chief of Staff there for a time. The real reasons which led to our separation at this moment I have never known. I sought them in material considerations, and asked

my Emperor to cancel the order. His Majesty graciously approved. After a short time General Ludendorff returned, full of grave experiences and holding even graver views of the condition of affairs among the Austro-Slav units.

The idea of a decision in the East must have been particularly welcome to the Austro-Hungarian General Staff. It must have recommended itself to them not only on military, but also on political grounds. They could not remain blind to the progressive deterioration of the Austro-Hungarian armies. If the war were dragged out for a long time the process would apparently make more headway in the armies of the Danube Monarchy than in that of their opponents. Further, the Austrians were fearful that the threatened loss of Przemyśl would not only increase the tension of the situation on their own front, but that under the impression which the fall of this fortress must make on the nation the signs, even then quite distinguishable, of the disintegration of the state and loss of confidence in a favorable termination of the war, would increase and multiply. Moreover, Austria-Hungary was already feeling herself threatened in the rear by the political attitude of Italy. A great and victorious blow in the East could fundamentally change the unhappy situation of the state.

Looking at the situation in that light, I took the

side of General Conrad when he suggested to the German High Command a decisive operation in the Eastern theater. Main Headquarters considered that they could not place at my disposal the reinforcements which I considered necessary for such a decision. Of the plans proposed, therefore, only one was allotted to my sphere of command, the great blow which we delivered in East Prussia.

At the beginning of the year four army corps were placed at our disposal and transferred from home and the Western Front. They were detrained in East Prussia. Part went to reinforce the Eighth Army and part to form the Tenth Army under General von Eichhorn. They deployed and separated with a view to breaking out from both wings of our lightly held intrenched position from Lötzen to Gumbinnen. The Tenth Russian Army of General Sievers was to suffer deep envelopment through our two strong wings, which were to meet ultimately in the East on Russian soil and thus annihilate to a great extent everything the enemy had not got away.

The fundamental idea of the operation was put into the following words for our army commanders on January 28th, while we were still at Posen:

I intend to employ the Tenth Army, with its left wing along the line Tilsit-Wilkowischki, to envelop the enemy's northern wing, to tie him down frontally with the Königs-

berg Landwehr Division and the left wing of the Eighth Army, and employ the right wing of the Eighth Army for an attack on the Arys-Johannisburg line and south thereof.

On February 5th precise battle orders were issued from Insterburg, whither we had gone to direct the operations. From the 7th onward they set in motion the two groups on the wings, a movement recalling in some respects our celebrated Sedan. And it was indeed a Sedan which finally befell the Russian Tenth Army in the region of Augustovo. It was there that our mighty drive came to an end on February 21st, and the result was that more than 100,000 Russians were sent to Germany as prisoners. An even larger number of Russians suffered another fate.

On the orders of His Majesty the whole affair was called the "Winter Battle in Masuria." I must be excused a more detailed description. What is there new I could say? The name charms like an icy wind or the stillness of death. As men look back on the course of this battle they will only stand and ask themselves: "Have earthly beings really done these things, or is it all but a fable and a phantom? Are not those marches in the winter nights, that camp in the icy snowstorm, and that last phase of the battle in the forest of Augustovo, so terrible for the enemy, but the creations of an inspired human fancy?"

In spite of the great tactical success of the

Winter Battle we failed to exploit it strategically. We had once more managed practically to destroy one of the Russian armies, but fresh enemy forces had immediately come up to take its place, drawn from other fronts to which they had not been pinned down. In such circumstances, with the resources at our disposal in the East, we could not achieve a decisive result. The superiority of the Russians was too great.

The Russian answer to the Winter Battle was an enveloping attack on our lines on the far side of the old Prussian frontier. Mighty masses rolled up to the enemy commander-in-chief for use against us, overwhelming masses, each one larger than our whole force. But German resolution bore even this load. Russian blood flowed in streams in the murderous encounters north of the Narew and west of the Niemen, which lasted into the spring. Thank God it was on Russian soil! The Tsar may have had many soldiers, but even *their* number dwindled noticeably as the result of such massed sacrifices. The Russian troops which went to destruction before our lines were missing later on when the great German and Austro-Hungarian attack farther south made the whole Russian front tremble.

At this time the most violent fighting was in progress not only on the frontiers of Prussia, but in the Carpathians also. It was there that the

Russians tried throughout the whole winter at any price to force the frontier walls of Hungary. They knew, and were right, that if the Russian flood could sweep into Magyar lands it might decide the war and that the Danube Empire would never survive such a blow. Who could doubt that the first Russian cannon-shot in the plains of Hungary would echo from the mountains of upper Italy and the Transylvanian Alps? The Russian Grand Duke knew only too well for what great prize he demanded such frightful sacrifices from the Tsar's armies on the difficult battlefields in the wooded mountains.

The fearful and continuous tension of the situation in the Carpathians and its reaction on the political situation imperiously demanded some solution. The German General Staff found one. In the first days of May they broke through the Russian front in northern Galicia and took the enemy's front on the frontiers of Hungary in flank and rear.

My headquarters was at first only an indirect participant in the great operation which began at Gorlice. Our first duty within the framework of this mighty enterprise was to tie down strong enemy forces. This was done at first by attacks in the great bend of the Vistula west of Warsaw, and on the East Prussian frontier in the direction of Kovno, then on a greater scale by a cavalry

sweep into Lithuania and Kurland, which began on April 27th. The advance of three cavalry divisions, supported by the same number of infantry divisions, touched Russia's war zone at a sensitive spot. For the first time the Russians realized that by such an advance their most important railways which connected the Russian armies with the heart of the country could be seriously threatened. They threw in large forces to meet our invasion. The battles on Lithuanian soil dragged out until the summer. We found ourselves compelled to send larger forces there, to retain our hold on the occupied region, and keep up our pressure on the enemy in these districts which had hitherto been untouched by war. Thus a new German army gradually came into existence. It was given the name of the "Niemen Army" from the great river of this region.

I have no space to deal with the movement of our armies, which began on May 2d in northern Galicia and, spreading along to our lines, ended in the autumn months east of Vilna. Like an avalanche which apparently takes its rise in small beginnings, but gradually carries away everything that stands in its destructive path, this movement began and continued on a scale never seen before, and which will never again be repeated. We were tempted to intervene directly when the thrust past Lemberg had succeeded. The armies of Germany

and Austria-Hungary wheeled to the north between the Bug and the Vistula. The picture that unrolled before our eyes was this: the Russian front in the southern half is stretched almost to breaking. Its northern half, held firmly on the northwest, has formed a mighty new flank in the south between the Vistula and the Pripet Marshes. If we now broke through from the north against the rear of the Russian main mass all the Russian armies would be threatened with a catastrophe.

The idea which had led to the Winter Battle presented itself once more, this time perhaps in yet broader outlines. The blow must now be delivered from East Prussia, first and most effectively from the Osowiec-Grodno line. Yet the marshes in that region prohibited our advance at that point. We knew that from the thaw in the previous winter. All that was left us was the choice between a break-through west or east of this line. A thrust right through the enemy defenses, I might say, into the very heart of the Russian army, demanded the direction past and east of Grodno. We put that view forward. Main Headquarters did not shut their eyes to its advantages, but considered the western direction shorter and believed that a great success could be won on this side also. They therefore demanded an offensive across the upper Narew. I thought that it was my duty to withdraw my objections to this plan for the time

being, for the sake of the whole operation, and in any case await the result of this attack and the further course of the operation. General Ludendorff, however, inwardly adhered to our first plan; but this difference of opinion had no kind of influence on our future thoughts and actions, and in no way diminished the energy with which, in the middle of July, we translated into action the decisions of Main Headquarters, the responsible authority.

Gallwitz's army surged out against the Narew on both sides of Przasnysz. For this attack I went personally to the battlefield, not with any idea of interfering with the tactics of the army headquarters staff, which I knew to be masterly, but only because I knew what outstanding importance Main Headquarters attached to the success of the break-through they had ordered at this point. I wanted to be on the spot so that in case of need I could intervene immediately if the army headquarters staff needed any further help for the execution of its difficult task from the armies under my command. I spent two days with this army, and witnessed the storming of Przasnysz, for the possession of which there had previously been violent and continuous fighting, and the battle for the district south of the town.

By July 17th Gallwitz had reached the Narew. Under the pressure of the allied armies, breaking

in on every side, the Russians gradually began to give way at all points and to withdraw slowly before the menace of envelopment. Our pursuit began to lose its force in incessant frontal actions. In this way we could not gather the fruits which had been sown time and time again on bloody battlefields. We therefore returned to our earlier idea, and, having regard to the course the operations were taking, wished to press forward beyond Kovno and Vilna with a view to forcing the Russian center against the Pripet Marshes and cutting their communications with the interior of the country. However, the views of Main Headquarters required a straightforward pursuit, a pursuit in which the pursuer gets more exhausted than the pursued.

In this period fell the capture of Novo Georgievsk. In spite of its situation as a strategic bridgehead, this fortress had certainly not seriously interfered with our movements hitherto. But its possession was of importance for us at this time, because it barred the railway to Warsaw from Mlawa. Just before the capitulation on August 18th I met my Emperor outside the fortress, and later on it was in his company that I drove into the town. The barracks and other military buildings, which had been set on fire by Russian troops, were still blazing. Masses of prisoners were standing round. One thing we noticed was that

before the surrender the Russians had shot their horses wholesale, obviously as a result of their conviction of the extraordinary importance which these animals had for our operations in the East. Our enemy always took the most enormous pains to destroy everything, especially supplies, which could be of the slightest use to his victorious foe.

To clear the way for a later advance on Vilna we sent our Niemen Army out eastward as early as the middle of July. In the middle of August Kovno fell under the blows of the Tenth Army. The way to Vilna was open, but once again we were not strong enough to proceed with the execution of our great strategic idea. Our forces were employed, as before, in following up frontally. Weeks passed before reinforcements could be brought up. Meanwhile the Russians were continuing their retirement to the east; they surrendered everything, even Warsaw, in the hope of at least being able to save their field armies from destruction.

It was only on September 9th that we started out against Vilna. It was possible that even now great results could be obtained in this direction. A few hundred thousand Russian troops might perhaps be our booty. If ever proud hopes were mingled with anxiety and impatience they were mingled now. Should we be too late? Were we strong enough? Yet on we went past Vilna, then

south. Our cavalry soon laid hands on the vital veins of the Russians. If we could only grasp them tightly it would mean death to the main Russian armies. The enemy realized the disaster that was threatening, and did everything to avert it. A murderous conflict began at Vilna. Every hour gained by the Russians meant that many of their units streaming eastward were saved. The tide turned and our cavalry division had to withdraw again. The railway into the heart of the country was open to the Russians once more. We had come too late and were now exhausted!

I do not delude myself into thinking that the opposition between the views of Main Headquarters and our own will have a historical interest. Yet, in judging the plans of our High Command, we must not lose sight of the whole military situation. We ourselves then saw only a part of the whole picture. The question whether we should have made other plans and acted otherwise if we had known the whole political and military situation must be left open.

III

Lötzen

From these serious topics let me turn to a more idyllic side of our lives in the year 1915 as I pass to my memories of Lötzen. This pretty little

town, lying among lakes, forests, and hills, was our headquarters when the Winter Battle in Masuria was drawing to its close. The inhabitants, freed from the Russian danger and the Russian "terror," gave us a touchingly warm reception. I have grateful memories, too, of pleasant visits to neighboring properties, which could be reached without too great loss of time when service claims permitted it, visits which brought us hours of relaxation, recreation, and good sport. There was also a certain amount of hunting. Our greatest triumph in this respect, thanks to the kindness of His Majesty, was the killing of a particularly fine elk in the royal shoot of Niemonien by the Kürisches Haff.

In the spring, when activity on our front gradually began to die down, there was no lack of visitors of all kinds, and this was true of the summer also. German princes, politicians, scientists, and professional men, as well as commercial men and administrative officials, came to us, brought by the interest which the province of East Prussia, usually so little visited, had acquired in the course of the war. Artists presented themselves with a view to immortalizing General Ludendorff and myself with their brushes and chisels; but this was a distinction with which we would have preferred to dispense, in view of our scanty hours of leisure, although we much appreciated the kindness and

skill of the gentlemen in question. Neutral countries also sent us guests, among others Sven Hedin, the celebrated Asiatic explorer and convinced friend of Germany, whom I learned to know and appreciate.

Of the statesmen who came to see us at Lötzen I must give a special mention to the then Imperial Chancellor, von Bethmann-Hollweg, and Grand-Admiral von Tirpitz.

Even while I was at Posen in the winter of 1914-15 I had had an opportunity of welcoming the Imperial Chancellor to my headquarters. His visit was inspired primarily by his personal kindness, and was not directly connected with any political questions. Nor do I remember that my conversation with the Imperial Chancellor touched on this subject at that time. In any case I had the impression that I was dealing with a clever and conscientious man. At this time our views about the military necessities of the moment coincided at all material points. Every word of the Chancellor's betrayed his deep sense of responsibility. I can understand that feeling, although from my soldier's point of view I considered that in his judgment of the military situation Herr von Bethmann showed too much anxiety and therefore too little confidence.

The impression I had gained in Posen was confirmed at Lötzen.

Grand-Admiral von Tirpitz, who was often quoted as Bethmann-Hollweg's successor about this time, was a personality of a very different stamp. On a long walk that I took with him he told me all the sorrows which vexed his flamingly patriotic and, in particular, seaman's heart. It was a bitter sorrow to him that the mighty weapon he had forged during the best years of his life should be shut up in its home harbors in time of war. It is true that the chances for a naval offensive on our side were uncommonly difficult; but, on the other hand, they did not improve with long waiting. In my opinion, the very great sensitiveness of the English to the phantom of a German invasion would have justified greater activity on the part of our fleet, and, indeed, heavy sacrifices. I considered it possible that such a use of the fleet might have tied up strong English forces at home and thereby relieved the burden of our army. It is said that the policy we pursued was intended to enable us to have a strong, intact German fleet whenever peace negotiations came in sight. A calculation of this kind would be absolutely erroneous, for a power which one dare not use in war is a negligible factor when it comes to the peace treaty.

The desire of the Grand Admiral's heart was granted in the spring of 1916. Skagerrak gave brilliant proof of what our fleet could really do.

Herr von Tirpitz also gave expression to his views about our U-boat operations. It was his opinion that we had begun to use this weapon at the wrong time, and then, frightened at the attitude of the President of the United States, lowered the arm which we had raised with such loud shouts of victory—likewise at the wrong time. The opinions the Grand Admiral then expressed could exercise no influence on the position I took up later with regard to this question. Almost another year and a half were to pass before the decision was to devolve on me. In that period, on the one hand the military situation had materially changed to our disadvantage, and on the other hand the efficiency of our navy in the sphere of U-boat operations had more than doubled.

IV

Kovno

In October, 1915, we transferred our headquarters to Kovno, in the occupied territory.

To the former activities of my Chief of Staff were now added the duties of administering, reorganizing, and exploiting the country with a view to procuring supplies for the troops, the homeland, and the local population. The increasing amount of work this involved would alone have been enough to take up the whole time and energies

of one man. General Ludendorff regarded it as an appendix to his ordinary work and devoted himself to it with that ruthless energy which is all his own.

It was while I was at Kovno that in the more peaceful spells during the winter of 1915-16 I found time to visit the forest of Bialoviesia. Unfortunately, the game had suffered severely from the effects of military operations. Troops marching through and poaching peasants had cleared a good deal of it. Nevertheless, in four days of splendid deer-stalking and sleighing in January, 1916, I managed to bring down a bison and four stags. The administration of the great forest demesne was intrusted to the tried hands of the Bavarian *Forstmeister* Escherich, who was a past master in the art of making the splendid timber supplies available for us without thereby damaging the forest permanently.

The same winter I paid a visit to the forest of Augustovo. Unfortunately, a wolf hunt which had been got up in my honor proved fruitless. The wolves seemed to have a preference for slipping away beyond range of my gun. The only traces of the battle of February, 1915, that I could see were some trenches. Apart from them, the battlefield had been completely cleared—at any rate, in those parts of the forest which I visited.

In April, 1916, I celebrated at Kovno the fiftieth anniversary of my entry into the service.

With thanks in my heart to God and my Emperor and King, who glorified the day with a gracious message, I looked back on half a century which I had spent in war and peace in the service of throne and Fatherland.

It was at Kovno that in the summer of 1812 a large part of the French army had crossed the Niemen on its way east. Recollections of that epoch, and the tragic conclusion of that bold campaign, had inspired our enemies with the hope that in the vast areas of forest and marsh in the heart of Russia our own armies would suffer the same fate through hunger, cold, and disease as had overtaken the proud armies of the great Corsican. This fate was prophesied for us by our enemies, perhaps less from inward conviction than with a view to tranquillizing uncritical opinion at home. It is true that our anxiety for the maintenance of our troops in the winter of 1915-16 was not small. For we knew that, in spite of all modern developments, we had to spend the worst season of the year in a relatively desolate part of the country, in many parts of which infectious diseases were rife.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1916 UP TO THE END OF AUGUST

I

The Russian Attack on the German Eastern Front

IN my sphere of command the year 1915 had not made its exit with the loud flourish of trumpets of an absolutely complete triumph. There was something unsatisfactory about the final result of the operations and encounters of this year. The Russian bear had escaped our clutches, bleeding, no doubt, from more than one wound, but still not stricken to death. In a series of wild onslaughts he had slipped away from us. Would he be able to show that he had enough life force left to make things difficult for us again? We found an opinion prevalent that the Russian losses in men and material had already been so enormous that we should be safe on our Eastern Front for a long time to come. After our previous experiences we received this opinion with caution, and indeed time was soon to show that this caution was justified.

We were not to be allowed to pass the winter in peace, for it soon appeared that the Russians were thinking of anything but leaving us alone. Things were stirring in and behind the enemy lines along our whole front and, indeed, far away to the south, although at first there was no means of knowing the intentions of the Russian High Command. I regarded the region of Smorgon, Dvinsk, and Riga as special points of danger for our lines. To these led the most effective of the Russian railways. But for a long time there were no open signs of an enemy offensive at the three points I have mentioned.

Activity was uncommonly lively in the enemy's back areas. Deserters complained of the iron discipline to which the divisions drawn from the lines were subjected, for the troops were being drilled with drastic severity.

Even in quiet times the relative strengths in the different sectors were extremely unfavorable to us. We could take it for granted that on an average each of our divisional fronts (nine battalions) was faced by two or three Russian divisions (thirty-two to forty-eight battalions). Nothing could show more eloquently than these figures the enormous difference between the demands on the fortitude of our troops as against those on the enemy. Of course this difference made itself felt to an extraordinary degree, not only in battle, but in the neces-

sary daily duties and fatigues. To what an enormous scale had these duties mounted, thanks to the immense extension of the front! The construction of trench lines and roads, the erection of hutments, as well as the amount of work involved in supplying the troops with war material, food, timber, etc., made the word "rest" practically a mockery to both officers and men. Yet in spite of all this the *morale* and health of the troops were remarkably good. If our Medical Services had not remained at the level they actually reached we should not, on this account alone, have been able to carry on the war so long. Some day, when all the material available has been scientifically worked through, the achievements of our Medical Services will be revealed as a glorious testimony to German industry and devotion for a great purpose. Let us hope they will then be made available for common humanity.

An unusual amount of activity began to be noticeable in the region of Lake Narocz and Postawy from the middle of February onward. From the mass of intelligence which reached us, the enemy's preparations for an offensive at that point became more and more obvious. At first I had not believed that the Russians would really select for a great blow a point which lay far from their best railways and, further, gave their masses little room to deploy and the subordinate com-

manders little chance of maneuvering, thanks to the nature of the ground. Coming events revealed to me the arrival of the improbable.

As the Russian preparations proceeded, not one of us realized their enormous scale. We should never have believed that we should have to deal with the whole of the Russian forces—about three hundred and seventy battalions—held ready in the region of Lake Narocz with the seventy odd battalions which we had gradually collected there. Moreover, as is known from a publication which was based on our calculations, this comparison gives only an inexact picture—firstly, because on both sides all the troops were not employed on the first day, and mainly because the Russian divisions did not attack the Germans simultaneously on a broad front, but concentrated in two powerful storming columns on the wings of von Hutier's Corps. The more northerly of these put in seven infantry and two cavalry divisions between Mosh-eiki and Wileity, in the Postawy sector, which was manned by only four German divisions at first; while the southern, comprising eight infantry divisions and the Ural Cossacks, tried to break through our barrier between Lakes Narocz and Wyszniw, which was held by our Seventy-fifth Reserve Division and the reinforced Ninth Cavalry Division. So there were about one hundred and twenty-eight Russian against nineteen German battalions!

The Russian attack began on March 18th. After an artillery preparation the violence of which had not previously been paralleled on the Eastern Front, the enemy columns hurled themselves at our thin lines like an unbroken wave. Yet it was in vain that the Russian batteries and machine guns drove their own infantry forward against the German lines, and in vain that enemy troops held in reserve mowed down their own first lines when these tried to withdraw and escape destruction from our fire. The Russian corpses were piled up in regular heaps before our front. The strain on the defense was certainly colossal. A thaw had set in and filled the trenches with melted snow, dissolved the breastworks, which had hitherto afforded some cover, into flowing mud, and turned the whole battlefield into a bottomless morass. In the icy water the limbs of the men in the trenches became so swollen that they could hardly move; but there remained enough strength and resolution in these bodies to break the enemy onslaughts time and time again. Once more all the Russian sacrifices were in vain, and from March 25th onward we could look confidently to our heroes at Lake Narocz.

After the battle was over the German army order of April 1, 1916, in the production of which we co-operated, ran as follows:

The following order of the Russian Commander-in-Chief on the Western Front of the 4th (17th) March, No. 527, shows

what a great objective these attacks were intended to reach:

“TROOPS OF THE WESTERN FRONT,

“Six months ago, fearfully weakened and with a small number of guns and but little small-arm ammunition, you arrested the advance of the enemy and took up your present positions after defeating his attempt to break through in the region of Molodetchno.

“His Majesty and your homeland now expect a fresh deed of heroism from you, the driving of the enemy from the frontiers of the Empire! When you start upon this high task to-morrow morning, trusting in your courage, your great devotion to the Tsar and fervent love of country, I am convinced that you will do your sacred duty toward the Tsar and your Fatherland and release your brothers who sigh under the enemy's yoke. God help us in this holy task!

(Signed) “EVERT, *Adjutant General*.”

To anyone who knows the circumstances it is certainly extraordinary that such an enterprise should be begun at a season of the year in which its execution might be faced with the greatest difficulties from day to day through the melting of the snow. The choice of this moment is therefore due far less to the free will of the Russian High Command than to pressure put upon it by some ally in distress.

If the Russians try to explain officially that the present cessation of the attack is mainly due to the change in the weather, it is certainly only half the truth. The losses they have suffered in their heavy defeat are at least as much responsible as the soaked ground. At a conservative estimate those losses are at least 140,000 men. It would be more accurate for the enemy commander to say that the great offensive has hitherto stuck fast, not only in marsh, but in marsh and blood.

As my conclusion I will take the following passage from a German officer's description of this spring battle:

Not much more than a month after the Russian Tsar had paraded his storm troops on the Postawy front, Field-Marshal von Hindenburg went to the front to thank his victorious regiments. At Tscherniaty and Komai, Jodowze, Swirany, and Kobylnik, only a few miles as the crow flies from the spot where the Tsar had held his review, the Field-Marshal spoke to the delegates of the troops from the front and distributed the iron crosses. For one moment commander-in-chief and grenade-thrower stood hand in hand, looking long and confidently into each other's eyes. The spring sun shone like a sun of victory over the Hindenburg front . . .

That was my share in the battle of Lake Narocz.

II

The Russian Offensive Against the Austro-Hungarian Eastern Front

"Verdun!" The name was continually on our lips in the East from the beginning of February in this year. We dare only mention it under our breaths and in secret. We pronounced the word in a tone which suggested both doubt and hesitation. And yet the idea of capturing Verdun was a good one. With Verdun in our hands our position on the Western Front would be materially strengthened. It would once and for all remove the salient at our most sensitive point. Perhaps, too, the capture of the fortress would open up further strategic possibilities in the south and west.

In my opinion, therefore, the importance of this fortress justified an attempt to take it. We had

it in our power to break off the attack at any time if it appeared impossible to carry it through or the sacrifices it exacted seemed to be too high. Moreover, had not the boldest and most improbable actions in attacks on fortresses succeeded brilliantly time after time in this war?

After the end of February the word "Verdun" was no longer uttered secretly, but loudly and joyfully. The name "Douaumont," like a beacon of German heroism, lit up the far distances of the East and raised the spirits even of those who were now looking with anxious care toward the development of events at Lake Narocz. I must admit that the attack on Verdun was also a bitter disappointment for us, for the enterprise meant that the idea of a decision here in the East had been finally abandoned.

As time went on Verdun was spoken of in yet another tone. Doubts gradually began to prevail, though they were but seldom expressed. They could be summarized shortly in the following question: Why should we persevere with an offensive which exacted such frightful sacrifices and, as was already obvious, had no prospects of success? Instead of the purely frontal attack on the northern arc of the defense, which was supported by the permanent work of Verdun, would it not be possible to use the configuration of our lines between the Argonne Forest and St.-Mihiel to cut the salient

off altogether? It must be left to the future and unprejudiced examination to say whether these questions were right.

Another word followed Verdun—the word “Italy,” which was mentioned for the first time after the battle of Lake Narocz had ended. This name, too, was uttered with doubt, a doubt far greater and stronger than in the case of Verdun. Indeed, not so much a doubt as an anxious foreboding. The plan of an Austro-Hungarian attack on Italy was bold, and from that point of view had therefore a military claim to success. But what made the plan seem venturesome was our opinion of the instrument with which it was to be carried out. If the best Austro-Hungarian troops were sent against Italy, troops to which not only Austria and Hungary, but Germany as well, looked with pride and hope, what was left against Russia? Moreover, Russia had not been so badly beaten as was suspected at the end of 1915. At Lake Norocz the immense determination of the Russian masses had again revealed itself in a fury and impetus compared with which the Austro-Hungarian units, many of them largely composed of Slav elements, had shown themselves even less effective than before.

In spite of reports of victories in Italy, our anxiety increased from day to day. It was justified only too soon by the events which now occurred

south of the Pripet. On June 4th the Austro-Hungarian front in Wolhynia and the Bukovina absolutely collapsed before the first Russian onslaught. The worst crisis that the Eastern Front had ever known, worse even than those of the year 1914, now began, for this time there was no victorious German army standing by ready to save. In the West the battle of Verdun was raging, and there were signs of the coming storm on the Somme.

The waves of this crisis reached even to our front, but not in the form of Russian attacks, fortunately for the whole situation. We could thus, at least, give a little help where the need was greatest.

Hitherto, on the German front the Russians had remained in their positions, but in the same strength as before. They had, therefore, obtained their first victory south of the Pripet with relatively weak forces, and not by the immense masses they usually employed. Brussiloff's plan must certainly be regarded as at the outset a reconnaissance, a reconnaissance on an immense front and carried out with great determination, but still only a reconnaissance, and not a blow with some definite objective. His task was to test the strength of the enemy's lines on a front of nearly three hundred miles between the Pripet and Rumania. "Brussiloff was like a man who taps on a

wall in order to find out which part of it is solid stone and which lath and plaster." So wrote a foreigner about the opening days of Brussiloff's attack. And there is no doubt that the foreigner was right.

However, the Austro-Hungarian wall revealed but few solid stones. It collapsed under the taps of Brussiloff's hammer, and through the gaps poured the Russian masses, which now began to be drawn from our front also. Where should we be able to bring them to a standstill? At first only one strong pillar remained standing in the midst of this conflagration. It was the Southern Army, under its splendid commander, General Count Bothmer. Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians—all held together by good discipline.

Everything that could be spared from our part of the great Eastern Front was now sent south, and disappeared on the battlefields of Galicia.

Meanwhile the situation on the Western Front had also become worse. The French and English, in very superior numbers, had hurled themselves at our relatively weak line on both sides of the Somme and pressed the defense back. Indeed, for a moment we were faced with the menace of a complete collapse!

My All-Highest War Lord summoned me and my Chief of Staff twice to his headquarters at Pless to confer with him over the serious situation

on the Eastern Front. It was on the second occasion, at the end of July, that the decision was taken to reorganize the system of command on the Eastern Front. The German General Staff, in return for the offer of a rescuing hand to Austria-Hungary—in spite of the claims of Verdun and the Somme—had demanded a guaranty for a stricter organization of the command on the Eastern Front. They were right! My sphere of command was accordingly extended to the region of Brody, east of Lemberg. Large Austro-Hungarian forces were placed under my command.

We visited the headquarters staffs of the armies newly assigned to us as soon as possible, and found among the Austro-Hungarian authorities perfect cordiality and ruthless criticism of their own weaknesses. I am bound to say that this knowledge was not always accompanied by the resolution to repair the damage that had been done; and yet, if ever an army needed one controlling and resolute will and one single impulse, it was this army, with its mixture of nationalities. Without them the best blood would run feebly in such an organism and be poured out in vain.

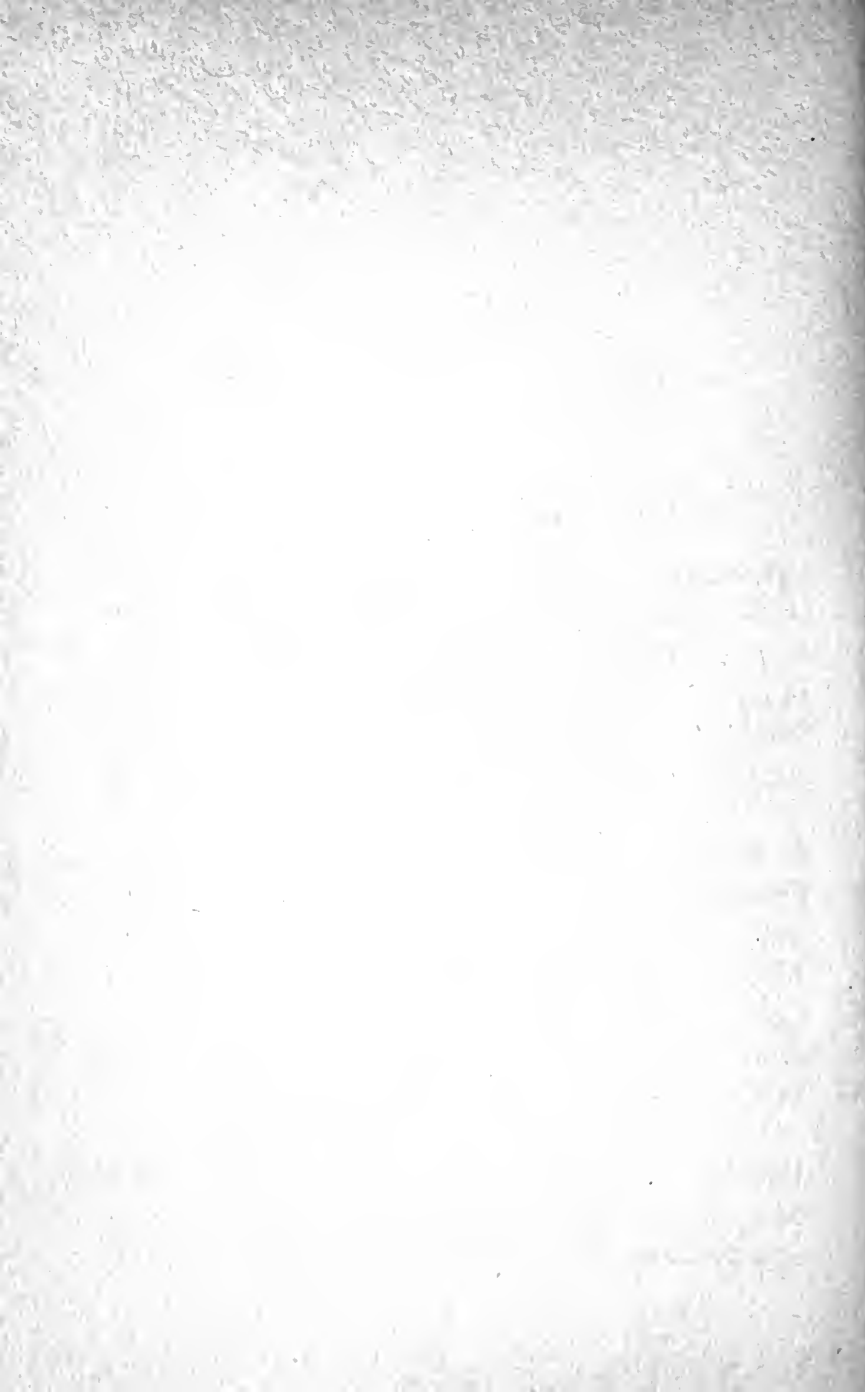
The extension of my sphere of command compelled me to transfer my headquarters to the south, to Brest-Litovsk. It was there that, on the morning of August 28th, I received a command from His Majesty the Emperor to go to his head-

quarters as soon as possible. The only reason the Chief of the Military Cabinet gave me was this: "The position is serious!"

I put down the receiver and thought of Verdun and Italy, Brussiloff and the Austrian Eastern Front; then of the news, "Rumania has declared war on us." Strong nerves would be required!

Part III

FROM OUR TRANSFER TO MAIN HEADQUARTERS
TO THE COLLAPSE OF RUSSIA



CHAPTER IX

MY SUMMONS TO MAIN HEADQUARTERS

I

Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army

AS is known, this was not the first time that my imperial and royal master had summoned me to conferences on the military situation and our plans. I therefore expected this time also that His Majesty merely wished to hear my views, personally and orally, about some definite question. As I anticipated being away only a short time, I took just as much kit as was absolutely necessary. On the morning of August 20th I arrived at Pless, accompanied by my Chief of Staff. On His Majesty's instructions the Chief of the Military Cabinet met us at the station. It was from his mouth that I first learned of the appointments intended for me and General Ludendorff.

In front of the castle at Pless I found my All-Highest War Lord awaiting the arrival of Her Majesty the Empress, who had come from Berlin and reached Pless shortly after I had. The Em-

peror immediately greeted me as Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army, and General Ludendorff as my First Quartermaster-General. The Imperial Chancellor, too, had appeared from Berlin, and apparently was as much surprised as I myself at the change in the office of Chief of the General Staff, a change which His Majesty announced to him in my presence. I mention this because here again legend has been at work.

The business of taking over from my predecessor was completed soon after. As we parted General von Falkenhayn gave me his hand with the words, "God help you and our Fatherland."

Neither on taking over my new office nor later did my Emperor, who always held my predecessor in high honor, tell me what were the reasons for my sudden summons to the new sphere. I never had the inclination, and then had not the time, to make inquiries for purely historical reasons. But the decision was unquestionably one of hours and not of days.

II

The Military Situation at the End of August, 1916

The military situation which gave rise to the change in our High Command was much as follows, judging by my first impressions:

The situation on the Western Front was not without anxiety. Verdun had not fallen into our hands,

and the hope of wearing down the French army in the mighty arc of fire which we had drawn round the northern and northeastern fronts of the fortress had not been realized. The prospects of a success for our offensive at that point had become more uninviting, but the enterprise had not yet been abandoned. On the Somme the struggle had now been raging nearly two months. There we passed from one crisis to another. Our lines were permanently in a condition of the highest tension.

In the East the Russian offensive in the southeastern part of the Carpathians was sweeping up to their very crests. After our previous experiences it was doubtful whether this last protecting wall of Hungary could be held against the new attack with the forces now available. Moreover, the situation was extremely critical in the foothills of the northwestern Carpathians. It is true that the Russian attacks at this point had died down somewhat, but it was too much to hope that this pause could continue for any considerable length of time.

In view of the collapse on the Galician front, the Austro-Hungarian offensive in the southern Tyrol had had to be abandoned. The Italians, in reply, had themselves passed to the offensive on the Isonzo front. These battles made a very heavy drain on the Austro-Hungarian armies, which were fighting against great superiority and under the

most difficult circumstances in a manner worthy of the highest praise.

Lastly, the position in the Balkans at this moment was of importance to the whole situation and the emergencies of the times. The offensive on which, at our suggestion, the Bulgarians had embarked against Sarraïl in Macedonia had had to be broken off after gaining preliminary successes. The political objective which was associated with this offensive—to keep Rumania from entering the war—had not been reached.

At the moment the initiative was everywhere in the hands of our enemies. It was to be anticipated that they would put forth their whole strength to keep up their pressure upon us. The prospects of a possibly speedy and victorious conclusion to the war must have inspired our adversaries on all fronts to exert the greatest efforts and endure the heaviest sacrifices. All of them certainly put in their last ounce to give the *coup de grâce* to the Central Powers while Rumania blew a triumphant blast!

The German and Austro-Hungarian armies had few uncommitted and available reserves at the moment. For the time being there was nothing but weak posts, largely customs and revenue police, on the Transylvanian frontier, which was immediately threatened. A certain number of exhausted Austro-Hungarian divisions, partly com-

posed of remnants no longer fit to fight, were quartered in the interior of Transylvania. The new formations, which were in course of completion, were not strong enough to be regarded as capable of a serious resistance to a Rumanian invasion of the country. In this respect the situation on the southern bank of the Danube was more favorable to us. A new army, composed of Bulgarian, Turkish, and German units, was being concentrated on the Bulgarian side of the Dobruja frontier and farther up the Danube. It had about seven divisions of very different strengths.

Such were, generally speaking, all the forces we had available for the moment at the most sensitive of all the sensitive spots of our European theater—the Rumanian frontier. The other troops we needed had to be taken from other battle fronts, from exhausted units which required rest, or obtained by forming new divisions. But it was just in this last respect that our situation was unfavorable, as was that of our allies. The situation as regards drafts threatened to become critical in view of the perpetual and indeed increasing tension. Further, the consumption of ammunition and material in the long and immense battles on all fronts had become so enormous that the danger that our operations might be paralyzed from this cause alone was not excluded. I shall return to the situation in Turkey later.

III

The Political Situation

My first impressions of the political situation at this time need a short description, as well as those of the military position. I will take that of my own Fatherland first.

When the conduct of operations was intrusted to me I regarded the country's *morale* as serious, though it had not collapsed. There was no doubt that people at home had been bitterly disappointed by the military events of the last few months. Moreover, the privations of daily life had materially increased. The middle classes, in particular, were suffering very severely from the economic situation, which affected them exceptionally intensely. Food had become very scarce, and the prospects of the harvest were only moderate.

In these circumstances Rumania's declaration of war ^{meant} meant a further burden on the country's resolution. Yet our Fatherland was even now apparently quite prepared to hold out. Of course, it was impossible to say how long and how strongly this resolution would be maintained. In this respect the course of military events in the immediate future would be decisive.

As regards the relations of Germany to her allies, the propagandist declarations of the enemy press had it that Germany exercised unlimited

domination. It was said that we held Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey by the throat, so to speak, ready to strangle them if they did not do exactly what we wished. Yet there could not be a greater perversion of the truth than this assertion. I am convinced that nothing showed the weakness of Germany, in comparison with England, more clearly than the difference between the political grip each of them had on her allies.

For instance, if official Italy had ever dared to show an open inclination for peace without British permission, England would have been in a position at any time to compel this ally to continue the policy she had previously pursued simply through fear of starvation. Equally strong and absolutely domineering was England's attitude to France. In this respect, indeed, only Russia was more independent, but here again the political independence of the Tsar's Empire was limited by its economic and financial dependence on England. How much more unfavorable was Germany's position from this point of view! What political, economic, or military weapons had we in our hands with which to repress any inclination on the part of any of our allies to drop out? The moment these states no longer felt themselves chained to us of their own free wills, or by the menace of certain destruction, we had no power to keep them at our side. I do not hesitate to bring forward these incontestable

facts as a special weakness of our whole situation.

Now to our allies in detail.

The domestic circumstances of Austria-Hungary had changed for the worse during the summer of 1916. A few weeks before our arrival in Pless the political leaders there had made no secret to our government of the fact that the Danube Monarchy could not stand any further burdens in the way of military and political failures. The disappointment at the failure of the offensive against Italy, which had been accompanied by far too many promises, had been very profound. The speedy collapse of the resistance on the frontiers of Galicia and Wolhynia had produced a feeling of uneasy pessimism in the great mass of the Austro-Hungarian people, and this found an echo in the Representative Assembly. Leading circles in Austria-Hungary were undoubtedly under the influence of this mood. Of course it was not the first time that pessimistic views from that quarter had found their way to us. They had too little confidence in themselves. As they did not know how to concentrate their resources, they misjudged even the extent of those resources. In saying this I am not ignoring the fact that the political difficulties of the Dual Monarchy were far greater than those of our unified German Fatherland. The food situation, too, was serious. The German-Austrian

part of the country, in particular, suffered very severe privations. In my opinion there was no reason to doubt the fidelity of Austria-Hungary, but in any case we must make it our business to see that the country was relieved of the pressure upon it at the earliest possible moment.

The domestic situation in Bulgaria was very different—I might say more politically stable—from that of Austria-Hungary. In their war for the political unity of the Bulgarian race the nation was also fighting for the final hegemony of the Balkans. The treaties concluded with the Central Powers and Turkey, in conjunction with her previous military successes, appeared to bring Bulgaria's far-reaching ambitions within range of fulfillment. It is true that the country had entered the new war very exhausted from the last Balkan war. Moreover, nothing like the same universal enthusiasm had marked her entry into the present war as had been displayed in that of 1912. This time it was due far more to cool calculation of her statesmen than to any national impulse. It was no wonder, therefore, that the nation felt satisfied with its present acquisition of the districts in dispute and displayed no strong inclination to embark on fresh enterprises.

Whether their hesitation in declaring war on Rumania—there had been no declaration at the time of my arrival at Pless—was really an expres-

sion of that feeling I may take leave to doubt even to-day. The food situation in the country was good, measured by German standards.

Taking things all round, I considered that I was justified in hoping that our alliance with Bulgaria would stand any military test.

No less confidence did I feel with regard to Turkey. The Turkish Empire had entered the war without any ambitions for the extension of her political power. Her leading men, particularly Enver Pasha, had clearly recognized that there could be no neutrality for Turkey in the war which had broken out. It could not, in fact, be imagined that in the long run Russia and the Western Powers would continue to heed the moderating influences with regard to the use of the Straits. For Turkey her entry into the war was a question of to be or not to be, far more than for us others. Our enemies were obliging enough to proclaim this far and wide at the very start.

In this war Turkey had hitherto developed powers of resistance which astonished everyone. Her active share in operations surprised friend and foe alike; she tied down strong hostile forces in all the Asiatic theaters. In Germany, Main Headquarters was often reproached later on with dispersion of force for the purpose of strengthening the fighting powers of Turkey. That criticism, however, does not allow for the fact that by thus

supporting our ally we enabled her permanently to keep more than a hundred thousand men of the finest enemy troops away from our Central European theaters.

IV

The German High Command

The experiences of the spring and summer of 1916 had proved the necessity of a single central and completely responsible authority for our army and those of our allies. After negotiations with the leading statesmen, a Supreme Command was created. It was conferred on His Majesty the German Emperor. The Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army received the right to issue orders "in the name of the Supreme Command" and make agreements with the commanders-in-chief of the allied armies.

Thanks to the friendly spirit and understanding co-operation of the commanders of the allied armies, who had otherwise the same status as myself, I was able to confine the use of my new powers to certain particularly important military decisions. The handling of common political and economic questions was not in the province of this Supreme Command.

My principal task was to give our allies the general outlines proposed for joint operations and concentrate their resources and activities with a

view to reaching the common goal. It would have been far better for all our interests if our High Command had been able, by suppressing all private interests, and indeed disregarding all considerations which were only secondary as compared with the main decision, to insist on a decisive victory in one of the main theaters of the war. However, in accordance with the unchanging nature of a coalition war, difficulties were often to crop up for our High Command, as they had to bear in mind all kinds of susceptibilities.

It is well known that in this war Germany was much more the giver than the receiver in her relations toward her allies. But, of course, this statement does not, and cannot, mean that Germany might just as well have fought this colossal war without allies. Further, the view which is frequently expressed, that Germany was supported by allies who were merely a lot of cripples, betrays a stupid ignorance of the truth as well as bias and exaggeration. This view ignores the fact that at many points our allies were holding up very superior enemy forces.

As I look back over the past, my impression is confirmed that, from the standpoint of the Supreme Command, the most difficult part of our task was not the great operations, but the attempt to compromise between the conflicting interests of our various allies. I will not attempt to discuss

whether, in most of these cases, political considerations did not play a larger part than military. One of the greatest obstacles to our plans and decisions was the different quality of the allied armies. It was only on taking over the conduct of operations that we gradually came to know what we could expect and demand from the forces of our allies.

It was during the campaign in Poland that I had first made the acquaintance of the Austro-Hungarian armies, when they were working in direct co-operation with our troops. Even then they were no longer equal to the demands which we were accustomed to make on our own troops. There is no question that the main cause of the deterioration in the average efficiency of the Austro-Hungarian troops was the extraordinary shock which the army had suffered in its purely frontal operation at the beginning of the war in Galicia and Poland, an operation which, as I have said, was in my view venturesome. It has been urged that the Austro-Hungarian offensive at that time had the result of breaking the onslaught of the Russian masses. On the other hand, it is possible that this result could have been achieved by a less risky method and at far less cost. In any case, the Russian army recovered from the losses it then suffered, while the Austro-Hungarian army did not. Indeed, they converted the bold and enter-

prising spirit of Austria-Hungary into a lasting fear of the Russian masses. All the efforts of the Austro-Hungarian High Command to make good the great harm that had been done were met by insuperable obstacles. I may be spared a more detailed recital of these. I will only put one question: How could any human agency have succeeded in breathing a fresh and revivifying impulse of common national resolution into the mixed nationalities of the Dual Monarchy after the first flower of determination, enthusiasm, and self-confidence had been blighted? In particular, how was the Officer Corps, which had suffered so heavily in the first invasion, to be brought to its old level again? Let us not forget that Austria-Hungary never had the moral forces at her disposal on which Germany was able to draw so often and so long.

It is quite an error to suppose that the whole Austrian army was affected at all points and to the same degree by the progressive deterioration of the troops. The Danube Monarchy had excellent units at its disposal right up to the end. It is true that in many quarters there was a strong leaning to unjustified pessimism in critical situations. In particular, the higher Austro-Hungarian commanders were subject to this weakness. This alone could explain the fact that even after splendid achievements in attack the determination of

our allies suddenly collapsed and, indeed, gave place to the reverse.

The natural result of the phenomena on which I have touched was that an element of great uncertainty was introduced into the calculations of our Supreme Command. We were never certain that some sudden collapse of part of the forces of our allies would not face us unexpectedly with a quite new situation, and so throw out all our plans. The troops of every army have their weak moments, for these are part of human nature itself. The general must allow for them as for a given factor, the dimensions of which it is impossible to ascertain. With really good troops such moments are usually quickly overcome, and even in the greatest collapses at least a nucleus of determination and spirit generally survives. But woe betide if this last nucleus too gives way! Disaster, rank disaster, overtakes not only the troops immediately affected, but also those tougher units on their wings or sandwiched in among them; the latter are caught by the catastrophe in flank and rear, and often suffer a worse fate than the poorer troops. This was frequently the tragic end of troops of ours which were sent to stiffen up the Austro-Hungarian front. Was it any wonder that, owing to this cause, the opinion of our troops about their Austro-Hungarian comrades was not always confident and complimentary?

Taking it all round, however, we must not underestimate the achievements of Austria-Hungary in this mighty contest and give way to those bitter feelings which have many a time been the result of disappointed hopes. The Danube Monarchy remained a loyal ally to us. We have passed through wonderful times together, and will take care not to drift apart, in spirit, in our common misfortune.

The internal framework of the Bulgarian army was quite different from that of the Austro-Hungarian. It was self-contained from the national point of view. Until the autumn of 1916 the Bulgarian army had suffered relatively little in the Great War. However, in estimating its value we could not forget that quite a short time before it had been engaged in another murderous war in which the flower of the Officer Corps, and, indeed, the whole of the educated classes of the country, had been destroyed. The reconstruction of the army was quite as difficult in Bulgaria as in Austria-Hungary. Moreover, the condition of the Balkan countries, virtually still primitive, hindered the introduction and employment of many means that are absolutely necessary both for fighting and for transport in modern war. This made itself felt all the more as on the Macedonian front we were faced by first-class French and English troops. For this reason alone it could not be at all sur-

prising that we had to help Bulgaria not only with material, but also with German troops.

The state of affairs in the Turkish army was otherwise than in the Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian. Our German Military Mission had scarcely had time to make its presence felt before the war, let alone effect a real improvement in the shaky condition of the Turkish army. Yet they had succeeded in mobilizing a large number of Turkish units. Unfortunately, the army had suffered extraordinarily high losses in the Dardanelles and their first offensive in Armenia. Yet the Turkish army seemed equal to the task which Main Headquarters first set it—the defense of the Turkish possessions. Indeed, it was to prove possible gradually to employ a considerable number of Turkish units in the European theater. Our military help to Turkey was practically limited to the delivery of war material and the loan of a large number of officers. In agreement with the Turkish General Staff, the German formations which had been sent to the Asiatic theaters up to the autumn of 1916 were gradually brought back, after the Turks had proved themselves capable of taking over and using the material left behind by these formations.

We sent material even to the Senussi on the north coast of Africa. These we supplied principally with rifles and small-arm ammunition, with

the help of our U-boats. Though these deliveries were but small, they had an extraordinarily rousing effect on the war spirit among the Mohammedan tribes. Hitherto we have not been able to appreciate the practical advantages of their operations to our cause. Perhaps they were greater than we believed at the time.

We tried to assist our brothers in arms even beyond the north coast of Africa. Thus we took up the idea, which had been mooted by Enver Pasha in 1917, of sending financial help to the tribes of the Yemen which had remained faithful to their Padishah in Constantinople. As the land route thither was closed to us by rebellious nomadic tribes of the Arabian desert, and the coasts of the Red Sea were out of reach owing to the insufficient radius of action of our U-boats, the only way left to us was that of the air. However, much to my regret, we did not possess at that time any airship which could with certainty have overcome the meteorological difficulties of a cruise over the Great Desert. We were, therefore, unable to carry out the plan.

In this connection I may mention, by way of anticipation, that in 1917 I followed with the greatest interest the attempt to send our Protective Force in East Africa arms and medical stores by way of the air.

As is well known, the Zeppelin had to return

when over the Sudan, as in the meantime the Protective Force had been driven farther south and transferred the scene of its operations to Portuguese East Africa. I need hardly say with what proud feelings I followed in thought the deeds, the almost superhuman achievements, of this splendid force during the war. They raised a deathless monument to German heroism on African soil.

Looking back on the achievements of our allies, I must admit that in the service of our great common cause they subjected their own powers to the greatest strain that their individual political, economic, military, and ethical resources permitted. Of course, none of them attained the ideal, and if it was we who more nearly approached that ideal than the others, it was only due to that mighty inward strength—a strength we did not ourselves realize at first—which we had been acquiring in the course of the last decades. This inward strength was to be found in all classes of our Fatherland. It did not slumber, but was always at work, and increased and multiplied even as it worked. It is only when a state is healthy in itself, and an incorruptible life force courses so strongly through it that at the critical moment the unhealthy elements are swept along by it, that such feats are possible as those which we performed, feats which went far beyond our obligations to our allies.

That these things could be is mainly due, as can historically be proved, to the Hohenzollerns, and among them our Emperor William II, in the last epoch of German greatness. True to the traditions of his house, this sovereign saw in the army the best school for the nation, and worked untiringly for its further development. Thus Germany's army stood out as the first in the world, an imposing guardian of the works of peace before the war, and in the war the very manifestation of our might.

V

Pless

The upper Silesian town of Pless had occasionally been selected for headquarters by Main Headquarters at previous periods of the war. The reason for its selection was the fact that it was close to the town of Teschen, in Austrian Silesia, in which the Austrian High Command had its headquarters. The advantages that accrued from the possibility of quick personal conferences between the two headquarters were now the main reason why we stayed there.

It was only natural that the German General Headquarters should form a meeting place for German and allied princes who wished to have direct discussion with my imperial master on political and military questions. The first sover-

eign whose personal acquaintance I had the honor of making was the Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria. He gave me the impression of a superb diplomatist. His political outlook extended far beyond the frontiers of the Balkans. He was a past master in the art of explaining the position of his country and keeping it in the foreground when great questions of world politics were being decided. It was his view that in this war the future of Bulgaria was to be decided by the final elimination of Russian influence and the gathering in of all men of the Bulgarian race under a single leadership. The Tsar never spoke to me of any of his other political ambitions. I was particularly struck by the way in which the Bulgarian sovereign conducted the political education of his eldest son. The Crown Prince Boris was to a certain extent the private secretary of his royal father, and seemed to me to be initiated into the most secret political intentions of the Tsar. This gifted prince, with his lofty habit of mind, played the important part intrusted to him most tactfully, modestly keeping himself in the background. Parental discipline was apparently pretty strict.

To all intents and purposes the Tsar conducted the foreign policy of his country in person. I am not able to say how far he also controlled the complicated internal affairs of the state. I believe, however, that he knew how to make his will felt

in the parliamentary anarchy of Bulgaria which frequently distracted the country. It may be, also, that he did this by autocratic methods. His task in that respect was no doubt very difficult. Like all the Balkan nations, the Bulgarians had stepped out of servitude into complete political freedom. They had not, therefore, had the training and hard work which accompany the slow transition from one stage to the other. I am afraid that these nationalities, often the possessors of such splendid natural endowments, have still many decades to suffer from the consequences of not having experienced that educative interregnum.

However that may be, the Bulgarian King was at that time one of the most distinguished statesmen. He always proved himself a faithful ally to us.

It was while we were in residence at Pless that the Emperor Francis Joseph died. Both for the Danube Monarchy and for ourselves his death was a loss the full and impressive import of which was only to be appreciated later. There was no doubt that with his death the ideal bond of union between the various nationalities of the Dual Monarchy was lost. With the venerable white-haired Emperor a large part of the national conscience of the conglomerate Empire sank forever into the grave.

The difficulties with which the young Emperor was faced were not to be compared, from the

point of view of numbers and complication, with those attending a change of throne in an empire composed of one nationality only. The new sovereign tried to make good the loss of the moral cement which the Emperor Francis Joseph's death involved, by making concessions to the various nationalities. Even in dealing with elements which were intent on the destruction of the state he believed in the moral effects of political toleration. The method was a total failure. These elements had long made their pact with our common enemies and were far from anxious to break off relations with them.

The impressions I had gained of General Conrad von Hötzendorf as soldier and commander were confirmed in the frequent and active personal intercourse with him which our residence in Pless involved. General Conrad was a gifted personality, a glowing Austrian patriot, and a whole-hearted adherent of our common cause. There was no doubt that it was from the deepest conviction that he proved so obdurate to political influences which strove to break him of that attachment. The general was very broad in his strategic ideas. He knew how to distinguish the central issues of great questions from the desert of secondary matters which had little effect on the decision. He had a peculiarly intimate knowledge of affairs in the Balkans and Italy.

The general was perfectly familiar with the great difficulties which stood in the way of a strong national impulse in the Austro-Hungarian army and all the defects to which this gave rise. Yet on occasion his great plans were based on an overestimate of what could possibly be expected of the army with which he was intrusted.

I also came to know the military leaders of Turkey and Bulgaria in the course of the autumn and winter at Pless.

In his dealings with me, Enver Pasha displayed unusually firm and free grasp of the elements of strategy in the present war and the methods required. The devotion of this Turk to our common task, great and heavy as it was, was unlimited. I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the Turkish generalissimo at our first conference at the beginning of September, 1916. At my request he was then describing the military situation in Turkey. With remarkable lucidity, decision, and frankness he gave us an exhaustive picture, and, turning to me, concluded with these words: "Turkey's position in Asia is in some respects very critical. We must expect to be thrown back yet farther in Armenia. It is not altogether improbable that the fighting in Irak will soon be renewed. Moreover, I am convinced that before long the English will be in a position to attack us in superior force in Syria. But what-

ever may happen in Asia, this war will be decided in Europe, and for that reason I put all my available divisions at your disposal."

Nothing more practical and unselfish has ever been said by one ally to another. Nor was it a matter of words only.

Although Enver Pasha took long views about war, generally speaking he had not received a really thorough military training, or what I might call a General Staff training. This was a drawback which apparently applied to all the Turkish commanders and their staffs. In this respect it looked as if it was a question of some natural defect with the Oriental. The Turkish army appeared to possess only a few officers who were able to master the technical, inside problems of command, a knowledge of which was essential to the execution of well-conceived plans. They seemed not to realize that the General Staff must necessarily look after the details, even in the execution of great operations. The result was that the wealth of Oriental imagination was often quite wasted, owing to a lack of a sense of military reality.

Our Bulgarian colleague, General Jekoff, was a very different character from the fertile-minded Turk. He was a man of remarkable powers of observation, not by any means blind to great conceptions, but essentially restricted in his outlook to the sphere of the Balkans. I am not in a posi-

tion to judge whether in the last respect he was held in leading-strings by his government. Whether that were so or not, he sincerely believed in the direction which Bulgarian foreign policy was taking. Certainly his views had nothing in common with her domestic policy.

General Jekoff loved his men and was beloved of them. In this connection I remember a remarkable expression he used when doubts were raised as to whether the Bulgarian soldier would not refuse to fight against the Russian, "When I tell my Bulgarians to fight they will fight, no matter against whom." For the rest, the general was not unaware of those defects of his soldiers which sprang from their national character. I shall return to this point later.

In addition to the leading military personalities of our allies I came into touch with their political leaders at Pless. I will confine myself here to a reference to the Turkish Grand Vizier, Talaat Pasha, and the Bulgarian Minister-President, Radoslavoff.

Talaat Pasha impressed me as a gifted statesman. He was in no doubt as to the magnitude of his problem and the poverty of his country's resources. If he did not succeed in eradicating the self-seeking and national indolence which hung like a millstone round his country's neck, it was mainly due to the enormous difficulties to be over-

come. It was quite impossible to improve in a few months what had been neglected for centuries and ruined long before the war by the mixture of nationalities and the inward moral exhaustion of many circles in the state. He himself reached the highest position in his country with clean hands, and held it with clean hands. Talaat was an excellent representative of the ancient Turkish chivalry. Absolutely loyal from the political point of view, he met us first in 1916 and said good-by to us in the autumn of 1918.

The weaknesses of Turkey's statesmanship, as well as her conduct of military operations, lay in their great dependence on the domestic situation. Members of the so-called Committee Government, self-seeking politically and financially, interfered in military affairs, and frequently tied the hands of the generals so that these were unable to improve recognized defects with the resources available. Of course a few really splendid men did everything within their power. But the authority of the state no longer extended into every part of the Empire. Constantinople, the heart of the Empire, beat too feebly and sent no healthy, invigorating, and life-giving blood to the distant provinces. It is true that new ideas had sprung up during the war and grew in quite Oriental profusion with the laurels of the victories at the Dardanelles and on the Tigris. The public began to

think of the religious and political unification of all Islam. In spite of the obvious failure that had attended the proclamation of a holy war, they began to count on the uprising of Mohammedan believers, in northern Africa, for example. The course of events was to show that these examples of religious fanaticism were only the effect of local peculiarities, and that the hope that they would extend to the distant areas of central Asia was an illusion—not merely an illusion, but a fatal military peril.

The Bulgarian, Radoslavoff, was more earthly in his political thought than the Turkish statesman with his large views. I venture to doubt whether Radoslavoff ever really appreciated in all its greatness the audacity of the step which brought Bulgaria to our side in 1915. I ought, perhaps, to say the greatness with which the Tsar endowed it. In his foreign policy Radoslavoff was always absolutely loyal to us.

The wild fury of Bulgarian domestic party controversy did not cease, even during the Great War, and was also widespread in the army. Russo-philic sentiments were a cause of dissension, but the contest between political parties went on among the troops, and their leaders also. For this Radoslavoff was partly responsible.

CHAPTER X

LIFE AT HEADQUARTERS

ENCOURAGED by the interest which has been taken in many quarters in my daily life during the Great War, I will now attempt to describe the course of an ordinary day at our headquarters. I must ask all those who have no liking for such trivialities in the middle of great world events to skip the next few pages. These details are not essential to a proper understanding of the mighty epoch.

It was impossible to think of a regular routine for our army headquarters, with each hour mapped out, during the war of movement in East Prussia and Poland in the autumn of 1914. It was only when our headquarters was transferred to Posen, in November, 1914, that greater regularity began to be observed in our official and—if such a thing exists in war—unofficial life. Later on our longer stay at Lötzen was particularly favorable for the organization of a strictly regulated routine.

My appointment as Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army made no material difference to the methods of business we had established and

found satisfactory, although in many respects more important and pressing activities took up our time.

I usually began the day's business at about nine o'clock—that is, after the morning reports had come in—by visiting General Ludendorff in order to discuss with him any changes in the situation and issue the necessary instructions. As a rule this did not mean a long conference. The military situation was always present to both our minds and we knew each other's thoughts. The decisions were, therefore, usually a matter of a few sentences; indeed, very often a few words were all that was required to establish that mutual understanding which served the general as a basis for his further working out of the plans.

After this conference I used to go for a walk for about an hour, accompanied by my adjutant. Occasionally I asked visitors at headquarters to join me in my morning walk, in the course of which I heard their sorrows as well as their suggestions, and chastened many an anxious soul before he hurled himself upon my First Quartermaster-General to pour out his heart about his wishes, hopes, and schemes to that authority whose business it was to go into further details.

After my return to the office I had further conferences with General Ludendorff, and then received the personal reports of my departmental heads in my own office.

Apart altogether from official duties, I had to deal with a mass of personal correspondence. There was quite a large number of people who considered themselves compelled to open their hearts to me in writing about every conceivable occurrence, or acquaint me with their views. It was perfectly impossible for me to read them all myself. I had to employ the services of a special officer for the purpose. Poetry as well as prose figured in this correspondence. Enthusiasm and the reverse were displayed in every possible degree. It was often very difficult to see any connection between the requests made to me and my official position. To take only two of hundreds of examples, it has never been clear to me what I, as Chief of the General Staff, had to do with the removal of refuse in a provincial town—no doubt very necessary in itself—or with the loss of the certificate of baptism of a German lady from Chile. Yet in most cases the writers called on me to help. There is no doubt that written requests of this kind were a proof of a touching, in many cases somewhat naïve, confidence in my personal influence. I was only too glad to help, at least with my signature, when time and circumstances permitted. But as a rule I considered it my duty to refrain from intervening personally.

About midday I was regularly summoned to make my report to His Majesty the Emperor.

At this conference General Ludendorff described the situation. When more important decisions had to be taken I made the report myself, and requested the Emperor's approval of our plans whenever that was necessary. The Emperor's great trust in us made a special royal approval unnecessary except in vital questions. For the rest His Majesty usually satisfied himself with hearing our reasons when new operations were proposed. I never remember any differences of opinion which were not composed by my war lord before the conference was over. The Emperor's wonderful memory for situations was of the greatest help to us at these reports. His Majesty not only made the most careful study of the map, but was in the habit of making sketches himself. The time of our daily report to the Kaiser was frequently also employed in conferences with representatives of the government.

After the conclusion of the report to the Kaiser my immediate staff joined me at the luncheon table. The time spent on the meal was cut down to what was absolutely necessary. I attached importance to my officers having time to get a little recreation afterward or getting away from work in some other way. To my continual personal regret, I could not consent to an extension of the meal time, even when we had guests with us. Regard for the maintenance of the efficiency of

my colleagues had to come before social graces. For the majority of these officers a sixteen-hour day was the rule. And this in a war lasting years! Thus we at Main Headquarters were compelled to use our human material to the extreme limit of capacity just as much as the men in the trenches.

The afternoon passed in much the same way as the morning. The longest break for all of us was dinner, which began at eight. After the meal we used to sit round in groups in neighboring rooms until General Ludendorff gave the signal to break up, at half past nine punctually. Conversation in our circle was usually very lively. It was perfectly free and absolutely frank, and covered all topics and occurrences that concerned us directly or were of general interest. Nor was there any lack of high spirits. I considered it a duty to my colleagues to encourage this side. It was a pleasure to see that our visitors were obviously surprised by our quiet confidence on the one hand and the spontaneity of our conversation on the other.

After our evening gathering broke up we went back together to the office. The final reports of the day had arrived and the situation on the different fronts been marked on the map. One of the more junior staff officers explained it. It depended upon the events in the various theaters whether I had to have a further conference with General Ludendorff or could dispense with his

services for the time being. The officers of my immediate staff now resumed work. Frequently it was at this stage that the last data required for the drawing up and issue of final orders were given, and it was from now onward that the innumerable requests, suggestions, and proposals of the armies and other services streamed in. The day's work thus never ended before midnight. The reports of the heads of departments to General Ludendorff lasted pretty regularly into the early hours of the next day. There would have to be quite an exceptional lull at the front for my First Quartermaster-General to leave his office before midnight, although he was always back again by eight o'clock next morning. We were all delighted when General Ludendorff could allow himself to knock off a little earlier, although it was only a matter of hours.

Our whole life and work and all our thoughts and feelings were shared in common. Even now the memories of this time fill me with grateful satisfaction. Generally speaking, we remained a restricted circle. In view of the official routine, changes of personnel were naturally infrequent. It was occasionally possible to meet the urgent requests of the officers for at least temporary employment at the front. Moreover, occasions arose in which it was necessary to send officers to particularly important parts of our own fronts or

those of our allies. But, generally speaking, the continuity of the very highly organized and complicated system required that at least the senior officers should remain permanently at their posts at Main Headquarters.

The hand of death was also felt in our midst. As early as 1916, when I was Commander-in-Chief in the East, I had lost Major Kammerer as the result of a chill. He was my personal adjutant, very dear to me, and universally esteemed. In October, 1918, Captain von Linsingen succumbed to an attack of influenza, which at this time was claiming many victims at Main Headquarters. In spite of the urgent representations of the doctor and his comrades, Captain von Linsingen considered that he could not leave his post at that extremely critical time, and he carried on until he *had* to put his work down, physically exhausted and shaken with fever, too late to be saved. In him we lost a comrade who represented the highest in spirit as in character. His young wife did not arrive in time to close his eyes. Many of those who were temporarily attached to my staff subsequently fell at the front.

This picture of our life would be incomplete if I said nothing of the visitors who came to us from all parts and at all times. I am not thinking now of our routine dealings with the many professional people who came into official touch with us, but

rather of others who were brought to us by many other interests. I gladly opened my door and my heart to them so long as they treated me with the same frankness.

We had a large number of guests, and, in fact, had few days without them. Not only Germany and her allies, but neutrals also sent us a considerable contingent. Our circle at table often gave me the impression of the most motley mixture of races, and it sometimes happened that a Christian minister sat down side by side with a Mohammedan believer. People of all social classes and parties received a warm welcome. I was glad to give them my few hours of leisure. Of the statesmen I have a preference for Count Tisza, who visited me at Pless in the winter of 1916-17. His whole being spoke of his unbroken strength of will and the glowing fervor of his patriotism. Other politicians of all shades of opinion from our own and allied lands came on flying visits to me. Sometimes there was something strange to me in their ways of thought, but I appreciated their ardor in our great common cause. I remember so many words of glowing patriotism as we parted.

In my circle I pressed the hard and horny hands of artisans and workingmen, and their frank looks and straightforward words were a real pleasure to me. Representatives of our great industries and men of science introduced us to new discoveries

and ideas and waxed enthusiastic over future economic plans. They certainly complained of the narrow-minded bureaucracy at home and the scanty resources put at their disposal for the exploitation of their ideas. On the other hand, bureaucrats grieved over the greed for gold of inventors for what they feared would turn out to be fantasies or mere airy schemes. I well remember the interesting questions of an official very high up in the Treasury service who wanted to know the cost of a shell of every caliber of gun, so that he could calculate the enormous cost of a battle. He spared me the result of his calculations, knowing, no doubt, that I would not limit the consumption of ammunition on that ground.

Other things besides necessities, cares, and ordinary duties found their way to us. Vulgar curiosity also sought admission. I have often laughed to myself over the different speeches with which an attempt at some sort of justification was made. Whether the result of such visits always came up to expectation I would not like to affirm in all cases. By way of contrast, many a splendid regimental officer, bearing the marks of hard fighting and a hard life, was a really welcome guest at our table. A few tales of trench life were far more eloquent than long written reports. The reality of what I myself had gone through in earlier years was brought vividly before my eyes. In this most

terrible of all conflicts everything had indeed reached the level of the grotesque in comparison with previous wars! The few hours' battle of past times had become the titanic action lasting months, and human endurance seemed to have no limits.

Count Zeppelin was another of our guests at Pless, and affected us all with the touching simplicity of his manner. Even at that time he considered his airship an antiquated weapon. In his opinion it was the airplane which would control the air in future. The count died soon after his visit, and thus never lived to see the disaster to his Fatherland. Happy man! Two other lords of the air who had gained laurels accepted my invitation—two invincible young heroes—Captain Bölcke and Captain von Richthofen. We liked the merry and modest ways of both of them. Honor to their memories. I had U-boat commanders also among my guests, among them Captain König, the commander of the commercial submarine *Deutschland*.

Thus no class and no clan was kept away from us, and I believe that we really often felt the common pulse of the army and our homeland, our allies and ourselves.

CHAPTER XI

MILITARY EVENTS TO THE END OF 1916

I

The Rumanian Campaign

OUR political situation with regard to Rumania during the campaigning year of 1915-16 had made exceptionally high demands not only on our statesmen, but on our army leaders as well. It is a piece of cheap wisdom to criticize the authorities and individuals then responsible after the entry of Rumania into the circle of our enemies and in view of our inadequate military preparations to meet the new foe. Such judgments, usually based on voluntary assertions and passed without knowledge of the real circumstances, remind me of an expression of Fichte in his *Reden an die Deutsche Nation*, in which he speaks of that brand of writer who always knows exactly what was going to happen after a success has been achieved.

There can hardly be any doubt that if the Entente had been in our position they would have eliminated the Rumanian danger, or perhaps it

would be better to say the Rumanian military menace, by 1915 at the latest, by the employment of methods such as they used against Greece. As was to be revealed later, Rumania was driven into the whirlpool of war by an ultimatum from the Entente in the summer of 1916. In that ultimatum Rumania was required either to intervene immediately or to renounce her schemes of aggrandizement forever. However, a solution of that kind would have been politically too high-handed to have found adherents among us without the very gravest necessity. We thought we ought to deal properly with Rumania, though certainly hoping that she would dig her own grave. This is exactly what happened, but after what crises and sacrifices!

Rumania's entry into the war on the side of our enemies was drawing very nigh when the Austrian Eastern Front collapsed. It is not impossible that the danger could have been averted even then if effect could have been given to the German plan of a great counterattack against the Russian southern wing which had reached the Carpathians. This operation was not carried out, simply owing to the series of collapses on the Austro-Hungarian front. The forces to have been used for attack were swallowed up in the defense.

In view of the course the fighting on the Eastern Front was taking in the middle of August, the

German General Staff, in conjunction with General Jekoff, had adopted the emergency measure of delivering a great blow against the Entente forces at Salonica with the Bulgarian wing armies. The idea was a thoroughly sound one from both the military and political points of view. If the enterprise succeeded, we could expect that Rumania would be cowed and there would be an end to her hopes—hopes she must even then have been cherishing—of co-operating with Sarraill. Rumania would probably be compelled to remain inactive if strong Bulgarian forces were released for employment elsewhere after a victory over Sarraill. The German General Staff, indeed, found itself placed to a certain extent in a military quandary through this very attack of the Bulgarians. As they were compelled to concentrate troops in northern Bulgaria to exercise a restraining influence on war fever in Rumania, which was growing stronger every day, forces which might have been employed for the attack on Sarraill on the Macedonian front had to be sent to the Danube for political reasons. The action of Main Headquarters was explained, on the one hand, by their confidence in the offensive capacity of the Bulgarian army, and, on the other, by a certain underestimate of the enemy's strength at Salonica. In particular we were absolutely deceived about the value of the newly formed Serbian units, six

infantry divisions, which had made their appearance there.

As regards the Bulgarian attack in Macedonia, the army on the left wing reached the Struma, but, on the other hand, that on the right wing could not get through in the direction of Voden. The enterprise was hung up at this point for reasons the discussion of which would carry us too far afield. On this occasion the Bulgarian infantry fought splendidly in attack, but were handled with more energy than skill. They gained glory, but victory had slipped from their grasp. This conclusion of the attack in Macedonia faced Main Headquarters with a new and difficult problem. The Rumanian war fever was continually on the increase. It was to be expected that the pause in the Bulgarian operation in Macedonia would rouse the warlike passions of political circles in Bucharest. Should the German General Staff now break off the Bulgarian attack finally with a view to bringing to northern Bulgaria strong Bulgarian forces from the Macedonian front, which had now been materially shortened, or should they venture to transfer to Macedonia the forces they had assembled on the Danube with a view to renewing the attempt to cut the Rumanian Gordian knot with the sword? Rumania's declaration of war solved the problem for Main Headquarters.

Thus had the general situation developed south of the Danube. Not less difficult was the situation north of the Transylvanian Alps. For while Rumania was openly arming, the battles on the German Western Front, as well as those on the Austrian Eastern and Southwestern fronts, were using up all the troops which Main Headquarters seemed to have available as reserves or could possibly still be drawn from parts of the front which were not being attacked. It seemed impossible to release any troops for use against Rumania.

The result was that the Rumanian declaration of war found us practically defenseless against the new enemy. I have devoted myself expressly to the development of this situation because I wish to make clear how the great crisis arose with which we found ourselves faced on and after that day. It can hardly be denied that such a crisis existed in view of the subsequent victorious course of the campaign.

But although the Quadruple Alliance had only made inadequate preparations to meet the Rumanian danger, it goes without saying that their responsible military leaders had come to a decision in good time about the appropriate measures for this eventuality. For this purpose a conference of the commanders-in-chief of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Bulgaria had been held at Pless on July 28, 1916. It resulted in the adoption of a

plan of campaign in which the following words figured in the decisive Cipher 2:

If Rumania joins the Entente, the most rapid advance in the greatest possible strength, to keep the war certainly from Bulgarian soil, and as far as possible from Austro-Hungarian, and invade Rumania. For this purpose

(a) Demonstration of German and Austrian troops from the north, with a view to tying down strong Rumanian forces.

(b) Rapid advance of Bulgarian troops over the frontier of the Dobrudja against the Danube crossings at Silistria and Tutrakan, with a view to protecting the right flank of the main force.

(c) Prepare the main force to cross the Danube at Nikopoli, with a view to attack on Bucharest.

The share of the Turks in a Rumanian campaign was arranged at a conference held with Enver Pasha at Buda-Pesth shortly afterward. Enver undertook to prepare two Turkish divisions for speedy employment in the Balkan Peninsula.

While my predecessor still held the reins no changes were made in this plan of campaign against Rumania. However, the different commanders-in-chief met several times to exchange ideas about it. Moreover, Field-Marshal von Mackensen, who had been appointed to command the troops concentrated south of the Danube, was also heard on the subject. On these occasions two currents of thought were clearly distinguishable. General Conrad favored the idea of a speedy and relentless advance on Bucharest, while General

Jekoff wished to open the campaign in the Dobru-dja. When war broke out the forces south of the Danube were still much too weak to carry out simultaneously the double task—*i.e.*, effect a crossing of the Danube and attack Silistria and Tutrakan, which had been set them on this front.

On August 28th my predecessor issued orders to Field-Marshal von Mackensen to attack as soon as possible. The direction and the objective were left to his discretion.

Such was the military situation with regard to Rumania when I took over the conduct of operations on August 29th.

It is certain that so relatively small a state as Rumania had never before been given a role so important, and, indeed, so decisive for the history of the world at so favorable a moment. Never before had two great Powers like Germany and Austria found themselves so much at the mercy of the military resources of a country which had scarcely one twentieth of the population of the two great states. Judging by the military situation, it was to be expected that Rumania had only to advance where she wished to decide the world-war in favor of those Powers which had been hurling themselves at us in vain for years. Thus everything seemed to depend on whether Rumania was ready to make any sort of use of her momentary advantage.

Nowhere was this fact appreciated more clearly, felt more keenly, and regarded with more apprehension than in Bulgaria. Her government hesitated to declare war. Can they be reproached on that account? Whatever may be the answer, when Bulgaria decided in our favor, on September 1st, the nation placed themselves at our side with all their resources, and inspired by all the hatred which dated from the Rumanian attack in their rear in the year 1913, when the country was engaged in a desperate struggle with Serbia and Greece. The murderous day of Tutrakan gave us the first proofs of the warlike ardor of our ally.

In view of our defective preparations, the plan of campaign which had been adopted had lost its original significance. In the first place the enemy had complete freedom of action. Thanks to the state of his preparations and numerical strength, which, unknown to us, had been materially increased by Russian help, it was to be feared that our own forces would be inadequate to limit the Rumanian High Command's freedom of movement to any appreciable degree at the outset. Great objectives and easy victories seemed to beckon to the Rumanians wherever they chose to begin operations—whether across the Alps against Transylvania, or from the Dobrudja against Bulgaria. I was particularly afraid of a Russo-Rumanian offensive toward the south. Bulgarians

themselves had expressed doubts whether their soldiers would fight against the Russians. General Jekoff's firm confidence in that respect—I mentioned this earlier—was by no means universally shared in Bulgaria. No one could doubt that our enemy would rely on Russophile sentiment in at least a large part of the Bulgarian army. Quite apart from that, it would have been easy for the Rumanians to hold out a hand to Sarail's army by an attack on the south. What would our position be if the enemy once again succeeded in interrupting our communications with Turkey—the situation which had existed before we embarked on the campaign against Serbia—or, worse still, forcing Bulgaria out of the Alliance? Turkey, isolated and simultaneously threatened from Armenia and Thrace, and Austria-Hungary, left with practically no hope, would never have survived a change in the situation so unfavorable to us.

The immediate advance of Mackensen, which my predecessor had ordered, was entirely in keeping with the needs of the hour. On the other hand, there could be no question of a crossing of the Danube with the forces available in northern Bulgaria. It would be enough for our purposes if we robbed the enemy of the initiative in the Dobrudja, and so upset his plan of campaign. But if we were to attain the last object really effectively we must

not limit the Field-Marshal's attack to the capture of Tutrakan and Silistria. It would be much better, by exploiting to the full the success in the southern Dobrudja, to try and make the Rumanian High Command anxious about the rear of their main force which was on the Transylvanian frontier. In that we absolutely succeeded. In view of the Field-Marshal's progress to within a menacing distance of the Constanza-Cernavoda line, the Rumanian commander-in-chief found himself compelled to send reinforcements to the Dobrudja from the forces engaged in his operations against Transylvania. At the same time, by bringing up other fresh troops, he tried to take Mackensen's offensive in the rear from Rahovo, downstream from Rustchuk. A fine plan on paper! Whether it was a Rumanian inspiration or that of one of her allies is still unknown, even to-day. After the experiences which the Rumanians had had of us before the day of this Rahovo interlude, I regarded the enterprise as more than bold, and not only thought to myself, but said openly, "These troops will all be caught!" This desire, clothed in appropriate orders, was fulfilled by the Germans and Bulgarians in the best possible style. Of the dozen Rumanian battalions which reached the southern bank of the Danube at Rahovo, not a single man saw his home again during the war.

Disaster now overtook Rumania because her

army did not march, her military leaders had no understanding, and at long last we succeeded in concentrating sufficient forces in Transylvania before it was too late.

Sufficient! Unquestionably sufficient for this enemy! We might possibly be called rash to the point of madness if the relative strengths were alone considered. However, we took the offensive against the Rumanian army, and on September 29th General von Falkenhayn destroyed the Rumanian western wing at Hermannstadt.

After the battle of Hermannstadt the general threw his army eastward. Disregarding the danger of the Rumanian numerical superiority and their favorable position north of the upper Aluta, he swept his main columns south of this river, along the foot of the mountains, toward Kronstadt. The Rumanians hesitated, lost confidence in their numerical superiority, as in their own capabilities, made no attempt to exploit the situation which was still favorable to them, and halted on the whole front. Even as they did so they took the first steps in retreat. General von Falkenhayn had now secured the initiative completely, overcame the enemy's resistance south of the Geisterwald, and marched on. The Rumanians were now in full retreat at all points from Transylvania, not without suffering another bloody defeat at Kronstadt on October 8th. They thus retired to

the protecting wall of their country. Our next task was to get over this wall. At first we had great hopes of strategically exploiting our previous tactical successes by forcing our way directly to Bucharest from Kronstadt. Though the rugged mountains and the enemy superiority set our few weak divisions a very heavy task, the advantages of a break-through from this direction were much too obvious for us to neglect the attempt. It did not succeed, though our troops fought stoutly for every peak, every cliff, and every boulder. Our advance was completely held up when a severe early winter laid a mantle of snow on the mountains and turned the roads into icy streams. In spite of unspeakable privations and sufferings, our troops held all the ground they had gained, ready to press on when time and opportunity should allow.

Our previous experiences showed us that we must find another road into the Wallachian Plain than that which led from Kronstadt across the broadest part of the Transylvanian Alps. General von Falkenhayn proposed an irruption through the Szurduk Pass, farther west. Of course, this direction was less effective from a strategic point of view, but under existing circumstances it was the only one possible from a tactical and technical point of view. We thus invaded Rumania through this pass on November 11th.

Meanwhile General von Mackensen had been ready, south of the Danube, to join hands with the invasion from the north. On October 21st he had thoroughly beaten the Russo-Rumanian army south of the Constanza-Cernavoda line. On the 22d Constanza had fallen into the hands of the Bulgarian Third Army. The enemy retired north at top speed. However, we broke off our pursuit as soon as a line of defense had been reached north of the railway which could be held with comparatively small forces. All the troops that could possibly be spared were sent to Sistova. Alluring was the prospect of occupying the whole of the Dobrudja, and then forcing our way to the rear of the Rumanian main armies in the region north of the Danube. The only question was, how were we to get the necessary bridging material to the northern Dobrudja? There were no railways there, and the Rumanian batteries on the northern bank of the Danube prevented us from using the river. We had to thank the gods that these batteries had not destroyed our one available heavy bridging train at Sistova long before, although it had been within range of the enemy guns for months, and owed its escape solely to what we regarded as an inexplicable omission on their part. [We were thus able to contemplate the crossing of the river, at any rate at that point.

In the gray morning hours of November 23d

Field-Marshal von Mackensen gained a footing on the northern bank of the Danube. The direct co-operation between him and General von Falkenhayn, for which we had been working, was achieved. It was crowned by the destruction of the Rumanian main force on the battlefield of the Argesch. The curtain came down on the last act on December 3d. Bucharest fell into our hands without resistance.

In the evening of that day I concluded my general report on the military situation with the words, "A splendid day." When I stepped out into the winter night later on, the church tower of the town of Pless was already pealing forth for the great new victory. For a long time I had been thinking of nothing else but the wonderful achievements of our brave army and hoping that these feats would bring us nearer to the conclusion of the terrible struggle and its great sacrifices.

It must be admitted that we had imagined the capture of the Rumanian capital as a rather more military affair. We had thought Bucharest was a powerful fortress, brought up our heaviest siege artillery to reduce it, and now the famous *place d'armes* had turned out to be no more than an open town. There were no longer any guns on the mighty walls of the forts, and the armored cupolas had been replaced by wooden roofs. Our spying in peace time, of which the enemy had so

much to say, had not even managed to discover that the fortress of Bucharest had been dismantled before the Rumanian campaign began.

The fate of Rumania had been brought to a dramatic conclusion. The whole world must see, and Rumania saw it well enough, that the old rhyme of the German pikeman was more than a mere empty sound:

*Wer Unglück will im Kriege han,
Der binde mit dem Deutschen an.¹*

In quoting this verse I do not wish in any way to depreciate the value of the help which Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria gave in this great and splendid enterprise. Our allies were all in their places and co-operated loyally in the heroic task. Rumania, who had had the fate of the world in her hands, must have been thankful that the remnants of her army were saved from destruction by Russian help. Her dream that, as in 1878 on the battlefield of Plevna, Russia would press her hand for services rendered in dutiful gratitude, though with bitter feelings at heart, had been cruelly reversed. Times had changed.

At the end of October, 1916, I had given my All-Highest War Lord my opinion that by the end of the year we should have concluded the Rumanian campaign. On December 31st I was able

¹ If anyone wants a disastrous war, let him pick a quarrel with the Germans.

to report to His Majesty that our troops had reached the Sereth and that the Bulgarians were on the southern side of the Danube delta. We had reached our goal.

II

The Fighting on the Macedonian Front

The difficulties of our military situation had been materially increased in the autumn of 1916 by the course of the fighting on the Macedonian front.

Sarrail's army would have lost its very *raison d'être* if it had not taken the offensive itself at the time of the Rumanian declaration of war. We expected it to attack in the valley of the Vardar. If it had done so, and reached the neighborhood of Gradsko, it would have seized the central point of the most important Bulgarian communications and made it impossible for the Bulgarians to remain in the district of Monastir. Sarrail chose to make a direct attack on Monastir, perhaps compelled by special political considerations. As the result of his offensive the Bulgarian army on the right wing was driven from its position, south of Florina, which it had won in the August offensive. In the further course of the fighting it lost Monastir, but then managed to hold fast. These events had compelled us to send reinforcements to the

Bulgarians from our own battle fronts, reinforcements which had nearly all been earmarked for the Rumanian campaign. If the amount of help we sent—about twenty battalions and many heavy and field batteries—was not very large compared with our whole resources, this sacrifice was imposed on us at an extremely critical moment in which every man and gun had to be economized.

Like ourselves, Turkey willingly sent help to her Bulgarian ally in her hard struggle. In addition to the reinforcements promised for the Rumanian campaign, Enver Pasha sent a whole Turkish army corps to relieve Bulgarian troops on the Struma front. This reinforcement was not accepted very willingly by the Bulgarians. They were afraid that it would form the basis for unpleasant political claims on the part of Turkey. However, Enver Pasha assured us expressly that he would prevent any such claims being formulated. It was quite comprehensible that Bulgaria should prefer German reinforcements to Turkish, but it was incomprehensible that Sofia would not see that Germany was in no position at this moment to increase the burden on her forces.

In my opinion the loss of Monastir had no military importance. In a military sense it would have been a great advantage if the Bulgarian right wing had been voluntarily withdrawn to the extraordinarily strong positions at Prilep, as this

would have materially facilitated the work of supply to the Bulgarian army and correspondingly hampered that of the enemy. It was just the enormous difficulties the Bulgarians had had with their communications which had greatly contributed to the crises which had supervened time after time in the recent battles. The troops had had to go hungry all day, and occasionally suffered from lack of ammunition. Putting our own interests on one side, we had done everything in our power to enable the Bulgarians to overcome these difficulties. The length of the communications to the rear, and the nature of this rugged and barren mountain region, made the solution of this problem uncommonly difficult.

In the battles for Monastir the Bulgarians had had their first experience of heavy fighting on the defensive. Although the previous reports of our officers about the condition of the Bulgarian army had spoken brilliantly of the splendid spirit displayed by the men in attack, these now began to speak of a certain reluctance to face long and continuous hostile artillery fire. This may seem a surprising assertion, but it is confirmed by the experience of all peoples, on the enemy's side as well as ours, who enter upon war with their so-called natural, primitive courage. It looks as if the nerve-racking effects of modern offensive weapons demand for an unshakable defense some-

thing more than this primitive courage, something which can only come from a higher training of the will. In the bulk of our German raw material there seems to be the right mixture of moral and physical powers which, combined with our military training of the will, enable our men successfully to resist the fearful effects of a modern battle. The commander-in-chief of the Bulgarian army realized this sensitiveness of his men to which I have referred. With soldierly frankness he told us of his concern on this point, though he was far from being of an anxious temperament.

III

The Asiatic Theaters

In view of the position which the German Chief of the General Staff now occupied within the framework of the combined operations, we were compelled to take an active interest in the course of events in the Asiatic theaters also. When Enver Pasha visited our headquarters at the beginning of 1916 our estimate of the situation in Asia was as follows:

The Russian offensive in Armenia, after reaching the line Trebizond-Erzingan, had come to a standstill. The Turkish offensive, which in the summer of this year had begun in the south from the direction of Diabekr against the left flank of this Rus-

sian advance, had made no progress, owing to the extraordinary difficulties of the country and the wholly inadequate supply system. It was to be expected that in view of the early approach of winter in the Armenian mountain-plateau the Russians would soon suspend their further attacks for good.

The fighting value of the two Turkish armies in the Caucasus had sunk to an extremely low level, and some divisions were divisions in name only. Privations, heavy losses, and desertion had had devastating effects on the establishments. Enver Pasha was extremely anxious about the coming winter. His troops were without the necessary clothing. Moreover, this region, barren and for the most part unpopulated and desolate, made the supply of the armies extraordinarily difficult. Owing to the shortage of draft and pack animals the requirements of the Turkish soldier in the way of food and military material in the dreary, roadless mountains had to be satisfied by carrier columns, and involved several days' march. Wives and children picked up a meager pittance in this way, but often found death, too.

The situation in Irak at this time was better. For the moment the English had not yet made sufficient progress with their communications to be able to embark on an offensive to revenge Kut-el-Amara. We had no doubt that they would take

their revenge, but we were not in a position to judge whether the Turkish forces in Irak were strong enough to offer a victorious resistance to the English attack. In spite of the very optimistic view of the Turkish General Staff we warned them that they ought to reinforce the troops there. Unfortunately, Turkey allowed herself to be led by political and pan-Islam ambitions to send a whole army corps into Persia.

The third Asiatic theater, southern Palestine, gave cause for immediate anxiety. The second Turkish attempt on the Suez Canal had been defeated in August, 1916, in the heart of the northern part of the Sinai peninsula. Following on this occurrence, the Turkish troops had gradually been withdrawn from this region and were now in the neighborhood of Gaza, on the southern frontier of Palestine. The question if and when they would be attacked here seemed to depend largely on the time which it would take the English to complete their railway from Egypt behind their front. The threatened attack on Palestine seemed far more dangerous for the military and political stability of Turkey than an attack in Mesopotamia, which was so far away. We must expect that the loss of Jerusalem—quite apart from the loss of the whole of southern Arabia, which it would presumably involve—would lay a burden on Turkish statesmanship which it would not be able to carry.

Unfortunately, the strategic conditions in southern Syria were not materially better for the Turkish operations than those in Mesopotamia. In both theaters the Turks, in striking contrast to their enemy, suffered from such extraordinary difficulties in their communications that a material increase of their forces beyond the existing figure meant hunger and even thirst for everyone. In Syria, too, the situation as regards food supply was occasionally desperate. To add to the bad harvest and involuntary or voluntary failures of the responsible authorities, the attitude of the Arab population was pretty generally hostile.

In the course of the war many well-meant representations were made to me in the hope of convincing me that Mesopotamia and Syria ought to be defended with stronger forces, indeed that we ought to pass to the offensive in both theaters. There was a great deal of interest in many German circles in these regions. Without saying as much, the thoughts of these gentlemen were probably straying beyond Mesopotamia to Persia, Afghanistan, and India, and beyond Syria to Egypt. With their fingers on the map men dreamed that by these routes we could reach the spinal cord of British world power, our greatest peril. Perhaps, too, such ideas were an unconscious return to earlier Napoleonic schemes. But we lacked the first elements—sufficient really effective lines of

supply—required for the execution of such far-reaching plans.

IV

The Eastern and Western Fronts to the End of 1916

While we were occupied in overthrowing Rumania the Russians had continued their operations in the Carpathians and Galicia. On the Russian side there had been no intention of giving the new ally direct assistance in her attack on Transylvania, but the continuation of the previous Russian attacks on the Galician front was to facilitate the Rumanian operations. On the other hand, the Russians gave Rumania direct help in the Dobrudja, and indeed from the outset. The reasons for this were as much political as military. Russia no doubt placed high hopes in the Russophile sentiment in the Bulgarian army. With this idea in view, when the battles in the southern Dobrudja began Russian officers and men tried to fraternize with the Bulgarians, and were bitterly deceived when the Bulgarians replied by firing at them. Another reason was that the occupation of Transylvania by Rumania aroused no political jealousy in Russia, but Russia could not suffer the new ally to bring Bulgaria to her knees by her own efforts and then possibly force her way to Constantinople or at least open the way there. For the capture of the Turkish capital had been

the historic and religious preserve of Russia for centuries.

I need not discuss whether it was good policy on the part of Russia to give the Rumanians no direct support, even by sending Russian troops for a nucleus, and allow her to conduct the operations in Transylvania single-handed. In any case the efficiency of the Rumanian army and its leadership were overrated, and there was an erroneous idea that the forces of the Central Powers on the Eastern Front had been completely pinned down by the Russian attacks and were absolutely exhausted.

It is true that these attacks did not entirely attain their purpose, but time and time again they produced considerable crises for us. Occasionally the situation was so bad that we were apprehensive that our defense lines would be thrown back from the crest of the Carpathians. Yet the maintenance of these lines was for us a condition precedent to our deployment and first operations against the new enemy. In Galicia, too, we had to keep back the Russians at any price. The evacuation of further stretches in that district would have been of small military importance for our general situation in itself if we had not had, immediately behind our lines in Galicia, the oil fields which were of such immense value to us and indeed absolutely indispensable for our military

operations. For this cause troops destined for the attack against Rumania had to be deflected to this part of the front when it showed signs of collapse.

But even though we survived the critical situation and brought our campaign against Rumania to a successful conclusion, it cannot be said that the Russian relief attacks had completely failed to achieve their great strategic purpose. It is certainly true that Rumania's allies were not responsible for her downfall. On the contrary, the Entente did everything that their situation and resources permitted, not only in direct association with the Rumanian army, but indirectly through Sarraill's attacks in Macedonia, the Italian offensive on the Isonzo, and lastly the continuation of the Anglo-French onslaught in the West.

As has already been said, we anticipated at the start that, with the entry of Rumania into the war, the enemy would renew his attacks on the Western Front also with all his might—English stubbornness and French *élan*. This is exactly what happened.

Our role as supreme directors of these battles was simple. For lack of men we could not contemplate the idea of a relief attack either at Verdun or the Somme, however strong were my own inclinations for such a measure. Very soon after I took over my new post I found myself compelled by the general situation to ask His Majesty the Emperor to order the offensive at Verdun to be

broken off. The battles there exhausted our forces like an open wound. Moreover, it was obvious that in any case the enterprise had become hopeless, and that for us to persevere with it would cost us greater losses than those we were able to inflict on the enemy. Our forward zone was at all points exposed to the flanking fire of superior hostile artillery. Our communications with the battle line were extremely difficult. The battlefield was a regular hell and regarded as such by the troops. When I look back now, I do not hesitate to say that on purely military grounds it would have been far better for us to have improved our situation at Verdun by the voluntary evacuation of the ground we had captured. In August, 1916, however, I considered I could not adopt that course. To a large extent the flower of our best fighting troops had been sacrificed in the enterprise. The public at home still anticipated a glorious issue to the offensive. It would be only too easy to produce the impression that all these sacrifices had been incurred in vain. Such an impression I was anxious to avoid in the existing state of public opinion, nervous enough as it already was.

We were disappointed in our hopes that with the breaking off of our offensive at Verdun the enemy would more or less confine himself to purely trench warfare there. At the end of October the French

opened a largely conceived and boldly executed counterattack on the eastern bank of the Meuse, and overran our lines. We lost Douaumont, and had no longer the strength to recover that field of honor of German heroism.

For this attack the French commander had abandoned the former practice of an artillery preparation extending over days or even weeks. By increasing the rate of fire of the artillery and trench mortars to the extreme limit of capacity of material and men, only a short period of preparation had preceded the attack, which had then been launched immediately against the physically exhausted and morally shaken defenders. We had already had experience of this enemy method of preparation for the attack in the course of the long attrition battles, but as the herald to a great infantry attack it was a novelty to us, and it was perhaps just this feature which doubtless produced so important a success. Taking it all round, on this occasion the enemy hoisted us with our own petard. We could only hope that in the coming year he would not repeat the experiment on a greater scale and with equal success.

It was not until December that the actions at Verdun died down. From the end of August the Somme battle too had taken on the character of an extremely fierce and purely frontal contest of the forces on both sides. The task of Main Head-

quarters was essentially limited to feeding the army with the reinforcements necessary to enable them to maintain their resistance. Among us battles of this kind were known as "battles of material." From the point of view of the attacker they might also be called "battering-ram tactics," for the commanders had no higher ideal. The mechanical, material elements of the battle were put in the foreground, while real generalship was far too much in the background.

If our Western adversaries failed to obtain any decisive results in the battles from 1915 to 1917 it must mainly be ascribed to a certain unimaginativeness in their generalship. The necessary superiority in men, war material, and ammunition was certainly not lacking, nor can it be suggested that the quality of the enemy troops would not have been high enough to satisfy the demands of a more vigorous and ingenious leadership. Moreover, in view of the highly developed railway and road system, and the enormous amount of transport at their disposal, our enemies in the West had free scope for far greater strategic subtlety. However, the enemy commander did not make full use of these possibilities, and our long resistance was to be attributed, apart from other things, to a certain barrenness of the soil in which the enemy's plans took root. But notwithstanding all this, the demands which had to be made on our com-

manders and troops on this battlefield remained enormous.

At the beginning of September I visited the Western Front with my First Quartermaster-General. We had to familiarize ourselves with the conditions there if we were to render any effective help. On the way there His Imperial and Royal Highness the German Crown Prince joined us and honored me at Montmédy by parading a storm company at the station. This reception was thoroughly in keeping with the chivalrous habit of mind of this exalted prince whom I was to meet frequently henceforth. His merry, frank manner and sound military judgment have always given me pleasure and confidence. At Cambrai, on orders from His Majesty the Emperor, I met two other tried army commanders, the Crown Princes of Bavaria and Württemberg, and the Prussian staffs which had been lent to them, and held quite a long conference with the Chiefs of Staff on the Western Front. Their statements showed that rapid and ruthless action was urgently necessary if our terrible inferiority in aircraft, arms, and munitions was at all to be made good. General Ludendorff's immense capacity for work overcame this serious crisis. To my great joy, officers from the front told me subsequently that the results of the conference at Cambrai had soon made themselves felt among the troops.

The extent of the demands which were being made on the army in the West was brought before my eyes quite vividly for the first time during this visit to France. I will not hesitate to admit that it was only now that I fully realized all that the Western armies had done hitherto. What a thankless task it was for the commanders and troops, on whom pure defense was imposed and who had to renounce the vision of a tangible victory! Victory in the defensive battle does not release the defender, even when he is victorious, from the permanent oppressive atmosphere of the battlefield, I might perhaps say the spectacle of all its misery. The soldier has to renounce that mighty spiritual exaltation which accompanies a victorious advance, an exaltation of such overwhelming force that a man must have experienced it to realize its true meaning. How many of our brave men have never known this, the purest of a soldier's joys. They hardly ever saw anything but trenches and shell holes in and around which they fought with the enemy for weeks and even months. What a strain on the nerves! How little to brace them! What a strong sense of duty and what self-sacrificing devotion must have been required to endure such conditions for years and silently to renounce all hopes of greater battle fortune! I admit frankly that these impressions gripped me deeply. I could now understand how everyone, officers and men alike,

longed to get away from such an atmosphere, and how all hearts were filled with the hope that now at last, after these exhausting battles, a stronger offensive spirit would mean more vigorous operations on the Western Front also.

But for all that, our leaders and their men were to wait a long time yet before those hopes could be fulfilled. Many of our best and finest fighting men had to pour out their hearts' blood in destroyed trenches before that stage was reached! It was only when the arrival of the wet season began to make the ground impossible that things became quieter in the battle area of the Somme. The millions of shell holes filled with water or became mere cemeteries. Neither of the contending parties knew the exaltation of victory. Over everyone hovered the fearful specter of this battlefield which for desolation and horror seemed to be even worse than that of Verdun.

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